

# DANTE



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# **DANTE**

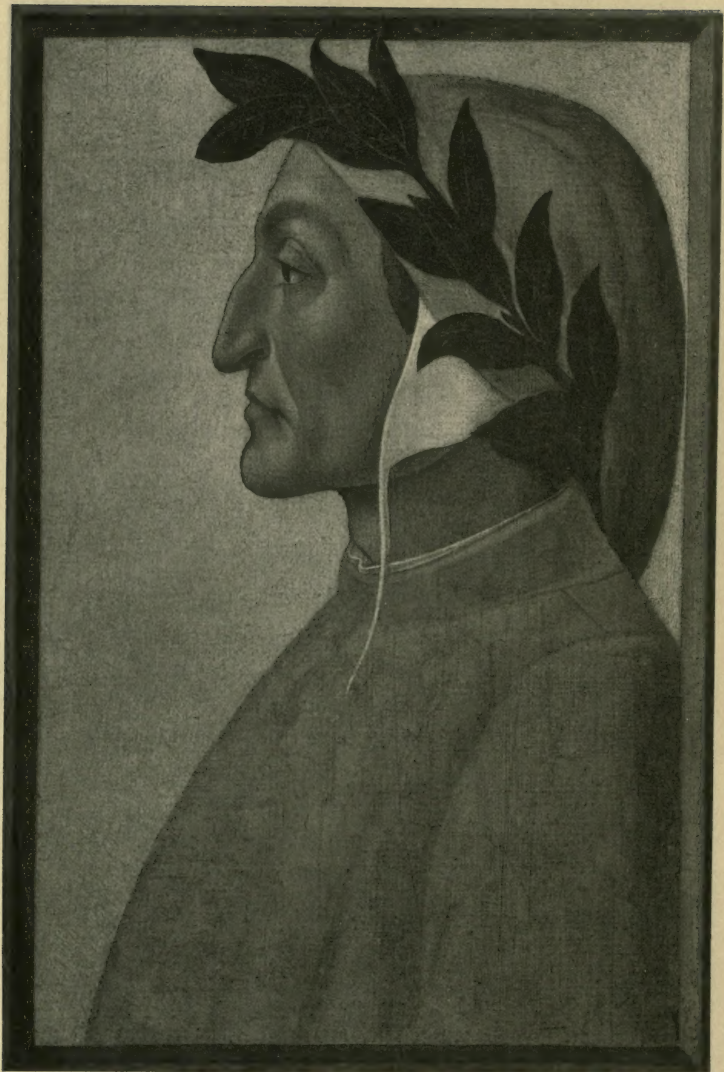
**ESSAYS IN COMMEMORATION**

**1321-1921**









*Dante*  
*By Amico di Sandro*  
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# DANTE

ESSAYS IN COMMEMORATION

1321—1921

*Quanto dirne si dee non si può dire,  
Chè troppo agli orbi il suo splendor s'accese.*

*With Illustrations*

**LONDON**

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON PRESS, LTD

18 WARWICK SQUARE, E.C. 4

1921

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SOME THOUGHTS ON DANTE IN HIS  
RELATION TO OUR OWN TIME

VISCOUNT BRYCE.

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## SOME THOUGHTS ON DANTE IN HIS RELATION TO OUR OWN TIME

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EVERY great book has its message to other ages as well as to that in which it is produced. When a powerful mind addresses itself to the permanent problems of human life,—the life of the individual and the life of society,—his thoughts are a recurring stimulus to one generation after another, because they go down to those foundations which are the same for all men in all times. When the great thinker is also a Poet, the words in which his ideas are expressed have an enduring charm which makes them always fresh, always enjoyable. The perfection of form keeps the ideas alive for those who have imagination and a sense of beauty, even if they be neither philosophers nor historians.

Dante is as truly a Thinker as he is a Poet, and were he not so great a poet, his thought would be sometimes too weighty for his poetry to bear the load. He is so intensely interested in the problems of his own time that he makes alive and real to us, living six centuries away, things which the dust of oblivion would otherwise have long since covered. Hardly any poet whom all ages have valued was so much concerned with his own. There have been great geniuses whom we can read without thinking of the times in which

they wrote. Pindar and Lucretius, Chaucer and Shakespeare, Ariosto and Molière, Keats and Walter Scott, would in the essential quality of their imaginative work have been much the same whenever they had lived; and in reading them we do not feel them to be children of their age and environment, even when it is from their surroundings that their themes are taken. I choose by preference instances of poets who are in other respects markedly unlike one another. Fewer are the cases in which the poet was so profoundly concerned with or moved by the events of his own time that he compels us to think of it when we think of him. Such are Milton and Wordsworth, Goethe and Schiller and Victor Hugo, Claudian and even, though in a subtler way, Virgil himself. But is any at once so universal, and at the same time so local or "temporary," if one may use that word in an unusual sense, as the Florentine exile? He is so evidently an Italian of the thirteenth century, that great and wonderful century of intellectual achievement, that we cannot think of him without it, nor of it without him. Yet he has also his message to us as well as to his contemporaries, and it may indeed be said that the deepest significance of that message has become plainer to us than it was to his contemporaries, and will remain full of meaning so far as we can look into the dim and distant vistas of the future.

Dante may be called the most political of the great poets. But he is also the most theological—indeed



more theological than he is political, because his politics are rooted in his theology. A third element, the furthest removed from politics, is Love; and in Dante's mind Love is so blent with Theology that one can hardly say where Love begins and Theology ends. That which seems to lie at the bottom of all his thinking, and to be the main burden of his poem, is Sin, both the power of Sin and the means provided for escaping from its power and reaching forward to purity and quietness of soul in this life with the hope of blessedness in the life to come. To his sight Sin seems to cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. Sin, and strife the offspring of Sin—strife, hatred, violence, injustice are spread everywhere in Europe. He sees tyranny rampant in France, where Philip IV, "*il mal de Francia*," was showing an example of rapacious ferocity which shocked even his own time. There was fighting in Spain, where the Christians were in hot battle with the Moors, while the Moors were also fighting among themselves. Lawless violence had raged far and wide throughout Germany, which after the death of Conrad IV had relapsed into anarchy; while in Britain the Scot and the Englishman were engaged in a furious and apparently interminable conflict.<sup>1</sup> But injustice and disorder were at their worst in Italy, the ancient seat of an Empire which had given Peace to the world. Dante had a first-hand knowledge of politics in his own city, and had learnt, as do most men who have had to swim that whirlpool, that in no department of human life

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, Canto XIX, l. 122.

does human nature wear a less engaging aspect. He had wandered alone through many lands, finding shelter sometimes in secluded monasteries, sometimes in the courts of princes, and had seen deep into the vanity of human ambitions and the worthlessness of transient pleasures. Forced to renounce the ordinary joys of life, his mind turned to the Past and sought for some explanation of the Divine Purpose in the course of history. What was the age in which an almost perfect peace prevailed over the whole world, and why did it then prevail? He found that age at the time when the first Roman Emperor ruled over a world reduced to obedience, and when in Judæa the Prince of Peace was born.

Always isolated, stern and stately in his isolation, mingling a love for his mother city with resentment at the citizens who had driven him forth from her, not to be deemed altogether unhappy, for his keenly observant and richly stored mind gave him the enjoyments of imagination and reflection, he was nevertheless filled with sad meditations upon the dominance of sin and strife, and seems to have been brooding for ever over the causes whence sprang the evils he saw everywhere all around him in Italy, and over the means for curing them.

The closing years of the thirteenth century had given much cause for disappointment to patriotic men and fervent Christians. The earlier years of that century had seen a wonderful revival in religion, as well as incessant labour and much creative



energy in the realms of thought. The two Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic had brought the teachings of the Church into the homes and hearts of peasants and the humbler townsfolk in a way unknown before. The great Universities had given an unprecedented impulse to logical and metaphysical discussion. Constructive minds, like those of St. Thomas of Aquinum and St. Bonaventura, had built up a compact scheme of theological doctrine in which pious Christians could find repose. The famous school of Bologna had turned to account the treasures of the ancient Roman jurisprudence and laid the foundation of the legal systems of the modern world. Pope Gregory the Ninth had followed their example and built up a parallel system of law for the Church. The brilliant dawn of poetry in Provence had been followed by an outburst of song in Italy. Painting had escaped from Byzantine formalism, and noble buildings, unsurpassed by any that have followed them, were rising everywhere in Lombardy and Tuscany. These were great achievements. Yet one feels in Dante, than whom no one ever loved theology and poetry and art more fervently, the note of disappointment. He sheds no tears over the fall of republics, but he denounces the tyrants who had risen by destroying the republics, and with whom Italy was filled.<sup>1</sup> He condemns the Ghibelline nobles, though he had been compelled to seek the hospitality of some of the best among them, as sternly as he

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio*, Canto VI, l. 124.

does those Black Guelfs who drove him forth from Florence.<sup>1</sup>

But that which pained him most was the decadence of what ought to have been at once the inspiring and guiding and restraining force in human society. The Church, or at least those who held power in the Church, had contracted the vices of the world. They were of the earth, earthy, ensnared by its temptations, partakers of its ambitions and its avarice, many of them almost as deep sunk in sensuality as the least scrupulous laymen.<sup>2</sup> When these were the shepherds, when such a man as Nicholas III bought himself into the Popedom,<sup>3</sup> and such a man as Boniface the Eighth was wearing the tiara, moral influence had been divorced from ecclesiastical authority. Moreover, the Church had (except during a few intervals of truce) been for two centuries at deadly feud with the secular power of the Emperor, and had in the person of pontiffs like Gregory IX, Innocent IV, and above all Boniface VIII, claimed a power over-riding or superseding, even in secular matters, that of the temporal monarch. If the light of the Church was going out in darkness, how great was that darkness!

A mind like Dante's could not mourn over these evils without seeking a remedy for them. Perceiving that the only complete and permanent cure was to be found in the purification of the soul, he set forth in his poem

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, Canto VI, l. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Inferno*, Canto XV, l. 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Canto XIX, l. 52.

the hideousness of sin and the awful penalties that awaited it, the means of purging it away, the final blessedness of those who were permitted, when purified, to enter the presence of God. However often he turns aside in the course of the poem into bypaths of astronomy, or dogmatic theology, or contemporary politics, or pensive recollections of those whom he had loved, we feel this to be his main aim and purpose.

This is the centre of all his thinking. But though he feels as a Christian that a return to primitive faith and an absolute subjection of the individual believer to the Divine Will is the only way to perfect virtue and happiness, he is concerned also with the special and tangible evils of his own time and tries to explore their causes. [The strife which was ruining Italy by substituting Force for Justice, seemed to him to spring from the perversion and corruption of one of the two authorities which God had provided for the direction of mankind, and from the weakness or slackness of the other. The Church had lost her heavenly purity: she was misusing her authority for selfish ends. The imperial power had been discredited by a feebleness which was largely due to the usurpations of the ecclesiastical sovereign.

This theory, which shines through nearly all his writings, is most explicitly set forth in the treatise *De Monarchia*. It was written to show how God had, partly by His express commands recorded in Scripture, partly by directing and disposing the actual course



of events, provided in the Roman Emperor a temporal sovereign to hold the sword, preserve order, administer justice, and in the Universal Bishop at Rome a spiritual sovereign bearing the pastoral staff, commissioned to proclaim the Law of Christ, whose Vicar he is, and to guide the temporal sovereign and his subjects into the path that leads to eternal life. This was the true order. But the Bishop, yielding to the lust of power, led astray by wealth and the love of it, had encroached on the province of his colleague, assuming the monarch's sword as well as the shepherd's staff.

“L' un l' altro ha spento, ed è junta la spada  
Col pastorale.”

Hence came confusion, no man knowing whom he should obey : hence the strife of Guelfs and Ghibellines, hence disorder and tyrannies in Italy, wars all the world over. The supreme need of Italy and the world was Peace. But Peace can be secured only by restoring the order established by God's providence, and recognising the imprescriptible rights of the Divinely appointed Emperor, no less than the Divine commission of the Universal Bishop, who holds the keys of Heaven and Hell.

The Monarchy of Dante's *De Monarchia* is not an Italian kingdom, though there had been for centuries a kingdom of Italy, and the emperors had usually received its crown, thereby establishing their feudal rights south of the Alps. Dante was not thinking of Italy as a political entity, nor of Italian nationality and Italian unity, nor indeed especially of Italy, except in so far

as he saw and felt most deeply for his own land and its sorrows. Italy was to him the Garden of the Empire, that choicest part of his dominions which ought to have been most cared for by the monarch, and had been most neglected. The sentiment of nationality, as we understand it, had not yet become a definite and self-conscious factor in the life of European peoples. The unity he desired was a unity that rose as a bright vision of the whole Christian world living in concord as one community under its two legally appointed heads. He was a Christian before he was an Italian, or a Tuscan, or a Florentine, the greater patriotism embracing, though not effacing, the minor duties and affections. He would have said, with the men of old, "*Roma communis omnium patria*," because Christian Rome was the centre of imperial glory and of sanctity.

How came it then that Dante was taken by the men of the *Risorgimento* from 1820 to 1860 as the earliest champion—one might almost say, as a patron saint—of the cause for which they wrote and fought and died—the independence and unity of Italy? Why did his name become a rallying cry for the friends of liberty? It may be said, and truly said, that the struggle of the patriots of those days was largely a struggle against the temporal power of the papacy, which then covered a large part of Central Italy, and was supported by Austria and by Naples, as well as by France, and that Dante, though strenuously orthodox, had condemned the secular ambitions of the pontiffs of his own time.

Dante  
Fights for  
Patriotic  
Cause

But there was a larger and more potent cause. The Italians had in the field of politics no national hero; it was in the field of literature that they must find a name who united them all, and represented the collective greatness of the nation. They found such a name in Dante. He was, he had long been, a national poet, more clearly and conspicuously the sun of the national firmament than any poet has been for France or Spain or Germany. Dante was for the Italians the embodied *gloria della lingua*. Dante loved Italy, as Virgil had loved Italy, with its beauty and its fertility, with its picturesque charm and its historic traditions:—

Tot congesta manu praeruptis oppida saxis  
Fluminaque antiquos subterlabentia muros,

and he had written of it as no one had done since Virgil had penned those incomparable lines which end with the solemn greeting:—

Salve magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus  
Magna virum; tibi res antiquæ laudis et artis  
Ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontes.

Dante had been the first great light of poetry to Italy since Virgil, and what Virgil had been to him, he became to Italy.

This, however, is a digression: I return from it to observe that the theory of a universal monarchy was not peculiar to Dante. It had been held by many before him. It was held by most educated men in his time, though most churchmen would have subordinated the imperial to the papal power, and



it continued to be held by many laymen and churchmen long after his time, though none ever stated and argued it with such passionate conviction. The very intensity of Dante's belief in his doctrine blinded him to the impossibility of giving effect to it. That impossibility was demonstrated seven years after his death by the failure of the only Emperor who ever seriously tried, after the fruitless effort of Henry VII, to assert imperial authority in Italy.<sup>1</sup> To Dante this was the dominant truth of politics, appearing so frequently in the *Divina Commedia* that parts of the poem are scarcely intelligible without a perception of the faith he had in it. To us it is only the illusion of a grand imagination and of a faith so strong as to make him believe that what ought to be will, because it ought to be, somehow come eventually to pass. That which commands our attention to-day is not the form which Dante's hopes took, but his ardour for the restoration of Justice and Peace, things to him inseparable, because without Justice there can be no Peace, since

<sup>1</sup> In A.D. 1328, the Emperor Lewis IV, with the help of the Colonna and of Castruccio Castracani, lord of Lucca, held a solemn assembly in Rome which deposed Pope John XXII, then residing at Avignon, and chose in his place a Franciscan friar, but next year this audacious scheme collapsed and the Emperor returned to Germany. He had been prompted and advised by Marsilius of Padua, who wrote a famous book (*Defensor Pacis*) denying papal claims and urging those of the Emperor. Dante may probably have met Marsilius at the court of the Della Scala in Verona, and one wonders whether the poet would have been more pleased by the defence of the Empire which the book of Marsilius contained or horrified at its heresies.

oppression and aggression provoke war, and without Peace there can be no Justice, since brute force will prevail against it. The call for Peace and some authority to enforce Peace that came from him first among laymen was taken up by great spirits in after ages, such as Erasmus in the beginning, and Henry IV of France in the end of the sixteenth century, Grotius and Leibnitz in the seventeenth, Kant in the eighteenth. All these thought and worked in vain. Everybody deplored the crimes and sufferings and losses war brought, but they were deemed inevitable, and had proved to be equally so under all forms of government, republics as well as monarchies. Our own time has seen these evils renewed on a vaster scale than ever before, and our twentieth century, like Dante's fourteenth century, opens with a sense of disappointment. Wonderful enlargements of human knowledge, immense additions to human wealth and comfort, have been followed by widespread slaughter and destruction; racial and national hatreds burn with a hotter flame and threaten further strife. In the midst of disasters and discouragements not so great as ours, Dante raised his voice to plead for Peace as the world's greatest need. As Wordsworth in a noble sonnet invoked the shade of his great predecessor :—

“Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour,  
England hath need of thee,”

so may Italy and England look back to the Florentine poet and prophet who saw the only safety for the world

in Justice and Peace, and may wish that an equally exalted soul and equally puissant voice were raised to plead for peace to-day. If some new Pilgrim of Eternity, guided by a new Virgil and another Beatrice, could bring back from Purgatory or Paradise a message to the peoples of this vaster world, would it not be that which Dante delivered to the peoples of his own: "Seek Peace and ensue it ; seek Peace through Justice, and despair not, as I never despaired" ?





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CARATTERE E UNITA DELLA POESIA  
DI DANTE

BENEDETTO CROCE.

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## CARATTERE E UNITÀ DELLA POESIA DI DANTE

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CHE cosa è lo spirito dantesco, l'ethos e il pathos della *Commedia*, la "tonalità" che le è propria? È—si può dire in brevi e semplici parole—un sentimento del mondo, fondato sopra una ferma fede e un sicuro giudizio, e animato da una robusta volontà. Quale sia la realtà, Dante conosce, e nessuna perplessità impedisce o divide e indebolisce il suo conoscere, nel quale di mistero è solo quel tanto a cui bisogna piegarsi reverente e che è intrinseco alla concezione stessa, il mistero della creazione, provvidenza e volontà divina, che si svela solo nella visione di Dio, nella beatitudine celeste. A Dante parve forse talora che anche questo mistero gli si diradasse, negli attimi in cui provò o immaginò mistici rapimenti; senonché questa mistica cognizione nella sua poesia si traduceva, e doveva tradursi, in modo negativo, come racconto di un'esperienza che si sia fatta di cose ineffabili. E parimente egli sa come convenga giudicare i varî affetti umani e come verso di essi comportarsi, e quali azioni approvare e compiere, e quali biasimare e reprimere, per rivolgere a verace e degno fine la vita; e la sua volontà non tentenna e oscilla tra ideali discordanti e non è straziata da desiderî che la tirino in parti

opposte. I dissidî e contrasti, che noi possiamo scoprire nei suoi concetti e nei suoi atteggiamenti, sono nel profondo delle cose stesse, si svolgeranno nella storia ulteriore, ma in lui rimangono in germe, non sviluppati, e non appartengono alla sua coscienza, che è coscienza compatta e unitaria: fede salda e abito costante, sicurezza del pensare e dell'operare. Ma in questa robusta inquadratura intellettiva e morale si agita, come si è detto, il sentimento del mondo, il piú vario o complesso sentimento, di uno spirito che ha tutto osservato e sperimentato e meditato, è a pieno esperto dei vizî umani e del valore, ed esperto non in modo sommario e generico e di seconda mano, ma per aver vissuto quegli affetti in sé medesimo, nella vita pratica e nel vivo simpatizzare e immaginare. L'inquadratura intellettiva ed etica chiude e domina questa materia tumultuante, che ne è interamente soggiogata, ma come si soggioga e incatena un avversario poderoso, il quale, anche sotto il piede del dominatore, anche tra le catene che lo stringono, tende i suoi muscoli forti e si compone in linee grandiose.

Non altro che l'atteggiamento spirituale che si è così definito hanno presente e si sforzano di cogliere e determinare le varie altre definizioni, che s'incontrano sparsamente presso critici e interpreti, circa il carattere della poesia dantesca. E come non vedere in niun modo ciò che è così reale ed effettuale e patente? La verità si fa valere sempre, o, per lo meno, traluce con molti bagliori. Senonché quelle formule si sforzano all'intento e mal vi riescono, perché o adoperano con-

cetti inadeguati, o fanno ricorso a metafore, o si perdono in astrattezze e in cataloghi di astrattezze. Si suol osservare, per esempio, che Dante ritrae non il divenire ma il divenuto, non il presente ma il passato; e che cos'altro si vuol dire con questa astrusa distinzione, o che cos'altro è in fondo alle osservazioni che l'hanno mossa, se non per l'appunto che, in Dante, tutti gli affetti sono contenuti e assoggettati a un generale pensiero e a una costante volontà, che ne supera la particolarità? Ma questa energica rappresentazione di una forza che supera e domina una forza è pure, come ogni poesia, rappresentazione di un divenire e non di un divenuto, di un moto e non di una stasi. Si suol dire che Dante è sommamente oggettivo; ma nessuna poesia è mai oggettiva, e Dante, come si sa, è sommamente soggettivo, sempre lui, sempre dantesco; sicché, evidentemente, "oggettività" e, in questo caso, una vaga metafora per designare l'assenza di turbamento e di dissidio nella sua concezione del mondo, il suo pensare con nitidezza e il suo volere con determinatezza e perciò il suo rappresentare con netti contorni. Si suol osservare che è proprio di Dante l'abolire ogni distanza di tempi e diversità di costumi, e uomini e avvenimenti di ogni tempo collocare sullo stesso piano: la qual cosa torna a dire che egli misurava le cose mondane di ogni tempo e di ogni sorta con unica e ferma misura, con un definito modello di verità e di bene, e proiettava il transeunte sullo schermo dell'eterno. Si enumerano i caratteri della forma dantesca, l'intensità, la precisione,



la concisione e simili; e certo chi domina con la forza del volere le forti passioni esprime qualcosa di vigoroso e d'intenso, e, poiché le affisa e conosce, è preciso, e, poiché non si perde nelle loro minuzie, è conciso; ma contentarsi di tali enumerazioni di caratteri varrebbe attenersi all'estrinseco. Si suol chiamarlo "poeta scultore," e non già "pittore"; e, certo, quando per l'atto dello scolpire e per lo strumento dello scalpello s'intende il gesto virile, vigoroso, robusto, risoluto, a differenza del dipingere a grand'agio col "lievissimo pennello" (come Leonardo ritraeva la sua arte), Dante sarà bene scultore e non pittore; delle immagini, che piace adoperare, non si disputa, se anche logicamente e criticamente siano prive di senso, com'è privo di senso il famoso parallelo tra Dante e Michelangelo. È noto un luogo dell' *Ottimo Comento*: "Io, scrittore, sentii dire a Dante che mai rima nol trasse a dir altro da quello ch'aveva in suo proponimento, ma ch'elli molte e spesse volte facea da vocaboli dire nelle sue rime altro che quello che erano appo gli altri dicatori usati di esprimere." *Verba sequentur*, e, se non seguono pronte, sono trascinate a forza, come aggiungeva il Montaigne. Anche quando si afferma che il carattere e l'unità della poesia dantesca stanno per intero nel metro, su cui il poema è cantato, nella terzina, incatenata, serrata, disciplinata, veemente e pur calma, si dice e non si dice il vero; come sempre, del resto, in simili tentativi di cogliere l'essenza dell'arte nelle forme astrattamente concepite, tentativi che son ora in molta voga, specialmente nella critica delle

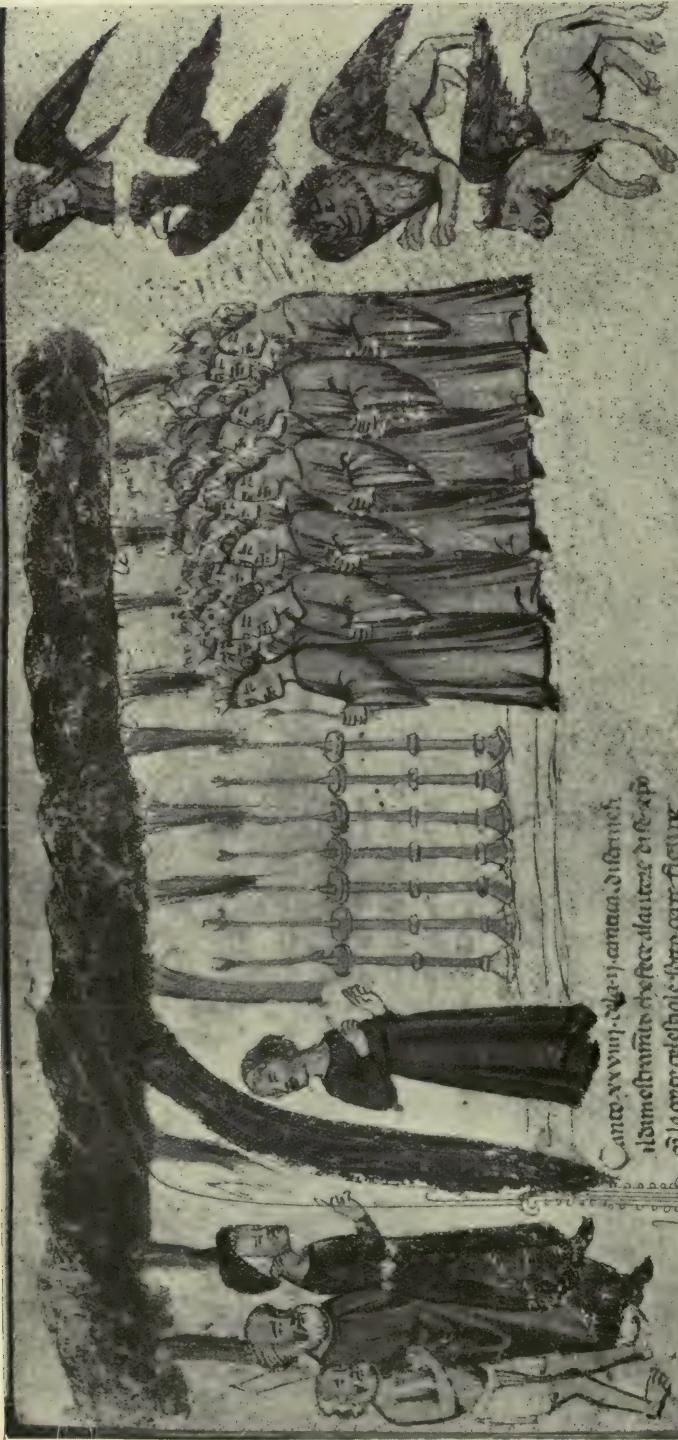
arti figurative. Senza dubbio, con la terzina solamente nasce il Dante della *Commedia*, e solo in essa e per essa egli vive il dramma della sua anima; e la terzina non poté essere (com'è stato talora congetturato) da lui intellettualisticamente e volontariamente scelta in quanto allegorica della Trinità, perché, se anche egli pensò a codesta allegoria, il suo pensiero dovè questa volta sovrapporsi o allearsi alla necessità della sua anima, alla spontanea mossa della sua fantasia espressiva, con la quale la terzina fa tutt'uno. Ma quale terzina? Non certamente la terzina in genere, ma quella propriamente dantesca, impastata col materiale linguistico, sintattico e stilistico proprio di Dante, battuta con l'inflessione e l'accento che egli le dà, diversa dalla terzina adoperata da altri poeti: con la quale ovvia considerazione si fa altresì chiaro che la terzina viene ricordata in questo caso non come determinatrice per sé stessa di quella particolare poesia, ma in quanto richiama tutto l'ethos e il pathos della *Commedia*, la sua intonazione o tonalità, lo spirito di Dante.

Che questo spirito sia uno spirito austero, risponde al concetto che universalmente si ha di Dante, ed è implicito nella caratteristica segnata di sopra, perché colui che raffrena e domina le passioni è austero, e, come tale, chiude in sé una grande esperienza di dolore. Ma, quando l'immaginazione dipinge un Dante col volto perpetuamente contratto dallo sdegno, o quando i critici parlano, come hanno parlato, del suo "umor nero," della sua "misanthropia," del suo "pessimismo,"

conviene forse ammonire a non esagerare, e giova procurar di ritoccare e di ammorbidire (come ci siamo provati a fare nel corso della nostra esposizione) qualcuna della linee di quel ritratto tradizionale e convenzionale. Quale che Dante apparisse ai contemporanei e passasse nella leggenda, e pur concedendo che la sua faccia fosse “pensosa e malinconica,” come scrive il Boccaccio, è certo, perché il poema ce lo prova, che egli ebbe nell’animo una ricchezza e varietà d’interessi che dal presente lo portavano all’antico, dalla immediatezza del vivere e soffrire al compiacersi dei ricordi eruditi e di scuola, e una ricchezza e varietà di affetti, che dai più violenti o dai più sublimi giungevano ai dolci e ai teneri e si stendevano ai celianti e giocosi. Ed era poeta : e il suo occhio di profugo per le terre d’Italia non guardava solo politicamente e moralmente le cose politiche e morali, ma spaziava in ogni sorta di spettacoli, godendo degli spettacoli, e si volgeva con ammirazione alle cose belle e si chinava con simpatia anche alle umili. Ed era, oltre che poeta, specificamente artista : e l’arte studiò sempre, e vi teorizzò sopra, e si gloriò del “bello stile,” e assai gioia ebbe dalla parola, dalla parola appropriata, calzante, sensuosa, che è il pensiero stesso che genera a sé, con divino fremito di creazione, il suo corpo vivente. Ci furono dunque nel suo animo molto più varî sentimenti, e soprattutto molto più lietezza che non si pensi generalmente ; sebbene anche quei sentimenti e quella lietezza s’inquadrassero per sempre nel suo abito austero e fossero in esso temperati e intonati.







E una melodia dolce co[n]tinua

placere lumen noster unde buongello

in se ripzder lardimto deua

Chella doue ubidia lacciti el acie

[illegible]

Qualunque ruba quella esila schiata /  
 c'è bestema disotto offen de idio /  
 che solo al uro suo la croe santa /  
 p'moder quella ipena euidasio /  
 anque milia ani epui lanima p'ma /  
 biamo colui che lmoz id is p'mio.

Quidio rispusti alla nō mi r'corda /  
 chio strama nē me giamai da uoi /  
 ne omne cōstienza che rimozdu.  
 E se m'cordar nō tene puoi /  
 idriddo rispusti oza m'mēta /  
 come beuesti dilette ancoi /



PLATES I and II.—PURGATORIO, Canto XXIX.

These plates represent a reduced reproduction of a page from a fourteenth-century manuscript, by the courtesy of the owners, Messrs. B. Quaritch, Ltd.





Su questo ethos e pathos di Dante, e sulla concezione intellettuale e le tendenze pratiche che lo condizionano, s'impianta di frequente la controversia, dibattuta non meno nei paesi stranieri che in Italia, intorno alla "modernità" o "non modernità" del suo spirito; il che, messo in termini più esatti e chiari, vale domandare se Dante possa o no essere a noi moderni il maestro e la guida della vita spirituale, degli ideali politici e morali, e di ogni altra cosa. Ora il vero è che tutti i grandi sono maestri di vita, ma nessuno può esser tale da solo, perché ciascuno di essi è un momento della storia, e la vera maestra è la storia tutta, e non solo quella che noi di continuo ricreiamo, ma anche, e soprattutto, quella che noi, in ogni istante, creiamo. Eterna nella forma della poesia, la *Commedia* è, per altro rispetto, ossia nella sua materia, limitata al momento storico in cui sorse e di cui si è già a suo luogo brevemente delineata la particolare fisionomia. E la considerazione di questo storico nascimento basta a discriminare ciò che in Dante c'è, che prima non era, e ciò che in lui non è, e non poteva essere, perché si formò di poi, e a togliere dal suo ritratto alcune ombre e colori, che vi sono stati malamente aggiunti.

Non c'è più in Dante il medioevo, il crudo medioevo, così quello della feroce ascesi come l'altro del fiero e allegro battagliare; ché mai forse niun altro gran poema è come quello di Dante privo di passione per la guerra in quanto guerra, delle commozioni che accompagnano la lotta militare, il rischio, lo sforzo, il trionfo,

l'avventura. L'epopea medievale, il ciclo carolingio, appena vi romba da lontano, in una terzina di paragone. In cambio dell' ascesi vi si ritrova la ferma fede, rafforzata da pensiero e dottrina; in cambio dell'ardore guerresco, l'ardore civile. Queste, e non più quelle cose, appartenevano all' età sua, all' Italia del suo tempo, o, a ogni modo, appartenevano alla sua coscienza e formavano oggetto della sua continua e intensa sollecitudine, della sua umana passione. E sebbene io abbia più volte manifestato la mia diffidenza e ripugnanza verso le caratterologie etniche dei poeti, pur dirò che, se il nome di "germanico," del quale Dante è stato fregiato (e non solo da tedeschi, e anzi non da tedeschi per primi), s'intende simbolicamente come designazione ora dell' impeto mistico e ascetico ora dell' impeto guerresco, Dante non fu "germanico," e dovrebbe denominarsi italiano o latino o con altretale contrapposto. Nella bellissima rievocazione che Giovanni Berchet fece, nelle *Fantasie*, dell' incontro di italiani e tedeschi a Costanza pei negoziati della pace, Dante non starebbe tra il "popol biondo" e tra i baroni che, col ferreo cappello e col busto chiuso nelle ferree maglie, "emergono segnal di un di'vetusto," ma in quel gruppo di avvolti in lunghe e semplici cappe, "sol cospicui per negri cigli accorti."

Per altro rispetto bisogna astenersi dal troppo ravvicinare, paragonando, Dante allo Shakespeare, il primo poeta pari a lui di grandezza che s'incontri dopo di lui nella storia della poesia europea; perché lo Shakespeare, per l'appunto, rappresenta, ed è,



un'altra epoca dello spirito umano, nella quale la concezione dantesca del mondo era stata sconvolta, e sulla chiarezza, che illuminava anche la necessità del mistero, si era distesa una nuova ombra di mistero, e la perplessità della mente e dell' animo, che Dante non conosceva o aveva presto vinta, era diventata la nota dominante.<sup>1</sup> E, quanto ai romantici, che poi seguirono, che cosa dire? Il loro infinito non è il suo, il loro sognare non è il suo sognare, il loro stile non è il suo " bello stile," il loro " sentimento della natura " (che Iacopo Grimm perciò negava a Dante) non è il suo, e, in genere, il loro sentimento della vita è l'opposto del suo: chi legge o declama Dante romanticamente lo sfigura e tradisce. Anche qui, se " germanico " si toglie come simbolo di " romantico," Dante, come non si può dire germanico del medioevo, così non fu dell'ottocento. Se egli avesse conosciuto gli eroi del romanticismo, i Werther, gli Obermann e i Renati, e la loro pallida genia, li avrebbe forse messi nella " belletta negra," tra gli " accidiosi." E qualcosa dovè conoscere di questa trista disposizione di spirito, che nel periodo romantico propriamente si arricchì, si complicò, si estese e ottenne ammirazione e apoteosi, ma che è di tutti i tempi; e forse esso stesso, da giovane, dovè, per alcun tempo, soffrire quella malattia, e, come gli eroi romantici, per effetto della malinconia, della tristezza, dell' accidia, si lasciò andare alle dissipazioni: se tale è il significato del sonetto che l'amico

<sup>1</sup> Rimando per questa parte al mio saggio shakespeariano, nel volume: *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille* (Bari, 1920).

Cavalcanti gl'indirizzava, rimproverandolo della "vil vita," nella quale "posava," dell' "anima invilita" e dello "spirito noioso," che s'era impadronito di lui. Ma, per ogni caso, egli si trasse presto fuori da questo smarrimento, e lo mise tra le altre sue esperienze; come mise tra le sue esperienze quelle furenti passioni amorose, delle quali parlano i suoi biografi, e ne fece l'episodio di Francesca. Nella *Commedia*, non c'è sentimentalismo di sorta, ma la gioia e il dolore e il coraggio del vivere, infrenato dal timore morale, sorretto e animato dall'alta speranza.

Tale è, in rapidi tratti, l'immagine di Dante, l'immagine autentica, quella che si desume dalla sua stessa opera. Ma non bisogna dimenticar mai,—e qui terminando conviene ripetere,—che quella immagine, che vale a differenziare Dante da altri poeti e ad aiutare l'intelligenza e la comprensione della sua opera, ritiene, come ogni caratteristica, alcunché di angusto e, per così dire, di prosaico, se non la si collochi e risolva nell' amplitudine della poesia, dell'unica poesia, che non si rinserra in cosa alcuna o gruppo di cose particolari, ma spazia sempre nel cosmo. Donde il nostro rapimento ai ritmi e alle parole di Dante, anche alle più piccole e fuggevoli, che ci vengono innanzi confuse di quell' incanto: o che mitologizzando egli dica dell' alba, "la concubina di Titone antico," che esce "fuor delle braccia del suo dolce amico," o che chiami la neve la "sorella bianca," e simili. Questo, che poi è l'essenziale, non comporta altra caratteristica che il carattere stesso universale della poesia; e in tal

riguardo Dante non è piú Dante, nella sua definita individualità, ma è quella voce meravigliata e commossa, che tramanda l'anima umana nella perpetuamente ricorrente creazione del mondo. Ogni differenza, a questo punto, svanisce, e risuona solo quell'eterno e sublime ritornello, quella voce che ha il medesimo timbro fondamentale in tutti i grandi poeti ed artisti, sempre nuova, sempre antica, accolta da noi con sempre rinnovata trepidazione e gioia : la Poesia senza oggettivo. A coloro, che parlano con quel divino o piuttosto profondamente umano accento, si dava un tempo il nome di Genî; e Dante fu un Genio.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These pages by B. Croce will be issued in a book by the same author, translated by Mr. Douglas Ainsley, and published during the present year by Henry Holt and Co., New York.





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# ALLEGORY AND MYTH

W. P. KER.

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## ALLEGORY AND MYTH

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DANTE is more given to analytical reasoning than any other poet : what seems at first most alien to poetry, the process of analytical division and explanation, accompanies his poems from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Paradiso*. But he cannot, any more than the most prosaic scholiast, make analysis do the work of poetry, or even explain it, and his account of allegory, in the letter to Can Grande, leaves out the main thing. Compare the prose interpretation of the Psalm *In exitu Israel* with the same phrase as it is sung in the celestial ship at the beginning of *Purgatorio*. The allegory is the same in poetry as in prose ; only in the poem the double reference which is part of the nature of allegory is absorbed in the one real meaning : *In exitu Israel de Ægypto* is not a text to be explained tropologically ; it is the song of the redeemed, and they are what they sing. Imaginative and poetical allegory is a different thing from the common allegorical interpretation of Scripture ; but there are no convenient words to express the differences.

Poetical allegory has a way of turning into poetical reality ; the image into the thing itself. The Psalm *In convertendo Dominus* is not surpassed even by Dante in the transcendent beauty of its change from allegory

to direct utterance : " When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto men that dream." You take this, rightly, for a song of triumph, but the triumph is verily a dream, a thought, a hope : and the true passion of the Church, not yet triumphant, is heard breaking through the dream : " Lord, turn again our captivity as streams in the South ! "

Much of the allegory in Dante's poetry is of this sort : reality breaking through and sweeping away the imagery. In *Piers Plowman* and the *Pilgrim's Progress* likewise, often, what we find is not an allegorical pilgrimage, but a true story. Dante's vision of eternal life in the *Paradiso* makes use of allegory, like other figures of speech, but the main argument is what he believed without any figure. He has nothing in verse or prose at all like the conventional epic allegory which descended from the mediæval moralisations of Ovid to Tasso, who wrote an allegorical interpretation of his *Gerusalemme liberata* ; to Pope, who adopted one ready-made for his *Iliad*.

It is not easy always to distinguish allegory from myth. Myth was allegory for the readers of " Ovid Moralised," the popular old French book which was not quite antiquated in the days of Rabelais. In a different way passages of mythology, like Narcissus or the spear of Peleus, became part of the tradition of the lyrical " courtly makers," used in similes and comparisons, not strictly allegorical. Dante in his copious use of mythology does not stop to interpret allegorically. He does not point out that Cain is

historical (*Purg.* xiv. 133) and Aglaurus not so (*ibid.* 139), if indeed he thought of any such difference. That he was not careless about historical truth appears curiously in *Monarchia* iii. 9, where the allegorical interpretation of Peter's two swords, which did not suit Dante's theory, is rejected in favour of plain historical fact. "Peter, as usual, answered without thinking of any deeper meaning." *Dicunt enim illos duos gladios quos adsignaverit Petrus duo præfata regimina importare: quod omnino negandum est, tum quia illa responsio non fuisset ad intentionem Christi, tum quia Petrus, de more, subito respondebat ad rerum superficiem tantum.*

Dante here, of course, had a particular motive for preferring the literal sense, but that does not spoil the force of this example, which shows clearly that his mind was not confused, as so many were, by tropological interpretations, to the point of not caring whether historical fact were fact or no.

With regard to Apollo and the other gods, he did not raise any question of historic truth or falsehood. He accepts what Jupiter said to Mercury in the *Aeneid* as evidence of the destiny of Rome. He does not encourage the common theory of the ancient gods, that they were fiends deceiving the people through oracles. He thinks more nobly of Apollo, though the other theory had been taught by St. Augustine, and was popularly current in *Ovide Moralisé*, and other books.

In certain most miraculous works of modern poetry,



in Collins's *Ode to Evening*, in Keats's *Autumn*, there is mythological imagination, personifying, and at the same time keeping what may be called the truth of ordinary experience. Wordsworth goes beyond this in his *Ode to Duty*: "Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong:" no figurative imagination, but vision of the law of the world. Dante thinks in the same way of Fortune (*Inf.* vii.), so intensely that he sees her as a goddess, turning her sphere in like manner as the Intelligences move the spheres of the planets. There is nothing like this anywhere else in his verse or prose; nowhere else does allegory or mythology turn into the revelation of an unknown deity. Nowhere else in Dante is there more clearly the accent of true worship than in Virgil's defence of Fortune:

Quest' è colei ch' è tanto posta in croce  
Pur da color che le dovrian dar lode,  
Dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce.  
Ma ella s' è beata e ciò non ode:  
Con l' altre prime creature lieta  
Volve sua spera, e beata si gode.

Words like allegory and mythology fail utterly to describe this poetical mode of imagination, yet both are required when one thinks of this passage, though it is as far removed as Wordsworth's "brave translunary things" from the common fashion of allegory.

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# OXFORD AND DANTE

PAGET TOYNBEE.

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## OXFORD AND DANTE

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“Fama superstes  
Gentibus extinctum memorat, populumque per omnem  
Vivet et æterno referetur laudibus ævo.”

(*Benevenutus Imol. in Dantem.*)

IN the following pages an attempt is made to give some account, necessarily only by way of summary, of the part played by Oxford and her sons in the furtherance of the study and appreciation of the works of “l’altissimo poeta,” the sixth centenary of whose death is being celebrated throughout the civilised world at the present time.

The earliest mention of Oxford in connexion with Dante occurs in the Latin commentary on the *Divina Commedia*, written by Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Fermo. This work was composed between February 1, 1416, and January 16, 1417, during the Council of Constance, nearly a hundred years after Dante’s death, at the instance of Serravalle’s two English colleagues, Nicholas Bubwith, Bishop of Bath and Wells (1407–1427), and Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury (1407–1417), the latter of whom, it may be noted, had been Chancellor of the University of Oxford (1403–1407).

In the preamble to his commentary Serravalle, who

had himself been in England, as we learn from his comment on *Inferno* xx. 126,<sup>1</sup> states twice, on what authority he does not tell us, that Dante visited England and studied at Oxford. This statement he makes in the first place *à propos* of Beatrice and of Dante's relations with her :—

“Notandum quod Dantes dilexit hanc Beatricem hystorice et litteraliter ; sed allegorice et anagogice dilexit Theologiam sacram, in qua diu studuit tam in Oxoniis in regno Anglie, quam Parisiis in regno Frantie ” (ed. Prato, 1891, p. 15).

He repeats it in the course of a discussion as to the etymology of the name Dante :—

“Dantes dicitur quasi Dans te ad aliqua. Iste auctor Dantes se in iuventute dedit omnibus artibus liberalibus, studens eas Padue, Bononie, demum Oxoniis et Parisiis ” (ed. *cit.*, p. 21).

Twenty-seven years after the completion of Serravalle's commentary a copy of the work<sup>2</sup> was presented (on February 25, 1444) to the library of the University of Oxford by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, a former member of Balliol College, together with a copy of the Italian text of the *Commedia*,<sup>3</sup> Oxford having thus been the possessor of the earliest recorded

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the Straits of Gibraltar, he says : “Ego iam transivi per illud angustum spatium, quando redibam de regno Anglie ad partes Ytalie per mare.”

<sup>2</sup> “Commentaria Dantes . . . secundo folio, *tormentabunt* ” (see *Times Lit. Supp.*, March 18, 1920).

<sup>3</sup> “Librum Dantes . . . secundo folio *a te* ” (see *Times Lit. Supp.*, April 22, 1920).

copy of the latter in England. The copy of Serravalle's commentary was still in the University library a hundred years later, when it was seen and registered ("Commentarii Joannes de Serravalle super opera Dantis Aligerii") during his tour through England as King's antiquary (1536-1542) by John Leland; but the copy of the *Commedia* itself had apparently disappeared.

In 1550 William Thomas, said to have been a scholar of Oxford, who in the previous year had published a *Historie of Italie*, in which he referred to Dante's account (*Inf.* xx. 55-93) of the founding of Mantua, issued an Italian grammar, the first attempt of the kind in English, under the title of *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammer, with a Dictionarie for the better understanding of Boccace, Petrarcha, and Dante*, which was three times reprinted, namely in 1560, 1562, and 1567.

In 1559, another Oxford scholar, John Foxe, the martyrologist, sometime Fellow of Magdalen, while engaged as press-reader in the printing-office of Johannes Oporinus (Johann Herbst) at Basle, saw through the press, as there is every reason to believe,<sup>1</sup> the *editio princeps* of Dante's *De Monarchia*, which was published by Oporinus in that year, together with three other tracts on the Roman Empire, in the volume entitled *Andree Alciati De Formula Romani Imperii*, a volume from which Foxe subsequently, in

<sup>1</sup> See my note on "John Foxe and the *editio princeps* of Dante's *De Monarchia*," in *Athenæum*, April 14, 1906.



the second edition of his *Book of Martyrs* (1570), quoted Dante's opinion concerning the donation of Constantine.

In 1567 an Oxford prelate, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, formerly Fellow of Corpus, in his *Defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande*, referred to Dante's denunciation of Rome in *Purgatorio* xxxii. 148 ff., this being the first citation of Dante by an English author as a writer against Rome.

In 1581 a son of Oxford, namely, Sir Philip Sidney, formerly of Christ Church, in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, made the first mention in English literature of Dante and Beatrice together by name. "Thus doing," he says (*i. e.*, if a man believe that poets can confer immortality), "your soule shal be placed with *Dante's Beatrix*, or *Virgil's Anchises*."

In 1602 the newly-founded Bodleian Library received from Sir Henry Danvers, afterwards Earl of Danby, a copy of the 1568 Venice edition of the *Divina Commedia*, with the commentary of Bernardino Daniello, which was registered, together with a folio edition of the *De Monarchia* (doubtless that published at Basle in 1566), and a copy of the second Aldine edition (Venice, 1515) of the *Commedia*, in the MS. catalogue compiled by Thomas James, Bodley's Librarian, in 1602-1603. In the following year (1603) a copy of the 1484 Venice edition of the *Commedia*, with Landino's commentary, which had first appeared at Florence three years before, was presented to the library by Sir Michael Dormer.

Two years later (1605) was published Thomas James's first printed Bodleian catalogue, in which, besides the editions of the *Commedia* presented by Sir Henry Danvers and Sir Michael Dormer, were registered the 1544 Venice edition with the commentary of Vellutello, and the 1512 Venice edition with the commentary of Landino, these, together with the second Aldine registered in the MS. catalogue, but now omitted by an oversight, making a total of five editions of the *Commedia* possessed by the University Library at this date.

In this same year (1605) John Sanford, a graduate of Balliol, at this time Chaplain of Magdalen, printed at Oxford *A Grammer, or Introduction to the Italian Tongue*, which contains sundry quotations, with translations, from the *Commedia* by way of illustration, and to which is prefixed the following motto from *Paradiso* xxvi. 130-132 :—

“Opera di natura <sup>1</sup> è c'huom favella,  
Ma se così ò così, natura lascia  
Poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella.”

In 1613 Bodley's Librarian, James, compiled a second MS. catalogue, in which an addition to the previous list of Dante's works was made in the shape of the 1610 Offenbach edition of the *De Monarchia*. The Basle edition of 1566, which was registered in the catalogue of 1602-1603, does not figure in this, having presumably been sold or exchanged, as being superseded by the later edition—a practice which,

<sup>1</sup> Misquoted, the correct reading being “Opera naturale.”

as the Library knows to its cost, led not many years later to the elimination from its shelves of the first folio of Shakespeare, which was only recovered, after nearly three hundred years' exile, for the sum of £3,000, raised by public subscription.<sup>1</sup> The second Aldine (1515) edition of the *Commedia*, which had been omitted from the catalogue of 1605, was again overlooked, in spite of James's description of this catalogue as "catalogus exactissimus," but it was restored to the list when the catalogue was printed in 1620.

In 1627 James printed at Oxford an *Index Generalis Librorum Prohibitorum a Pontificiis*, arranged alphabetically, in which, under the head of Dante, are included the *De Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, the 1564 Venice edition of the latter, containing the commentaries of Landino and Vellutello, being specially banned.

The next mention of Dante by an Oxford author occurs in 1661, in which year Barten Holyday, son of an Oxford tailor, who was educated at Christ Church, and subsequently became Archdeacon of Oxford, published at Oxford a poem in ten books called *The Survey of the World*, consisting of about a thousand disconnected couplets, of which one (No. 354) is devoted to Dante :—

"Heav'n, Purgatory, Hell, were Dante's Three Themes.  
Two were Wise Melancholy ; yet extremes."

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<sup>1</sup> In March 1906. See Strickland Gibson, *Some Oxford Libraries*, pp. 75-76.



In the notes to a translation of Juvenal completed some years before this date, but not published till 1673, after his death, Holyday quotes the stricture upon Dante of "a learned Italian," Nogarola, a "hypercritick," who, he says, "does censure at once the whole Italian tongue, even the Tuscan puritie, terming it but *peregrinitas Latini sermonis, et verborum colluvies*; and as for the three most famous of the ancient poetical wits in that language, Dante, Petrarch and Boccace, he requires in the first more *elegant words*; in the second *matter and sentences* for his words; and in the third *discretion* (very magisterially)."

About this time (1661-1666) Anthony Wood, a native of Oxford, formerly a Postmaster of Merton, compiled his *Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford*, an early chapter of which contains an interesting comparison between the old "Vicus Scholarum" at Oxford, and the "Vicus Stramineus" (Rue du Fouarre) at Paris, "where the philosophical professors taught in the time of Dantes the poet," this being an obvious reference to Dante's mention of the street (as "Vico degli Strami") in *Paradiso* x. 137, as the place where Siger de Brabant "sillo-gizzò invidiosi veri." It may be observed in this connexion that if Dante ever was a student at Oxford, as Serravalle alleges, he would have been as familiar with the "Vicus Scholarum" (Schools Street, the present Radcliffe Street, which was a continuation of the former Schydyerd Street, now Oriel Street) as

he presumably was with the Rue du Fouarre at Paris.

In 1674 Thomas Hyde, of Queen's College, who was Bodley's Librarian from 1665 to 1701, issued the third printed Bodleian catalogue. The meticulous particularity displayed in this catalogue in connexion with Dante's name, who is described as "Dante Alghieri, sive Alighieri vel Aligherius, seu Aligieri, vel Alaghieri," was unfortunately not extended to the list of his works, which was responsible for at least one long-standing bibliographical error. In this list the total of editions of the *Divina Commedia*, which in the 1620 catalogue was five, is reduced to four, the 1515 Aldine edition, which had been omitted from the catalogues of 1605 and 1613, but had been included in that of 1620, being once more overlooked. *Per contra*, we now find registered for the first time an edition with the commentary of Landino, printed at Venice in 1584. This edition, however, though duly registered by Colomb de Batines in his *Bibliografia Dantesca*, as I have shown elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> has no existence, the copy in question being, no doubt, the 1484 Venice edition presented by Sir Michael Dormer in 1603. Hyde's catalogue registers no less than five editions of the *De Monarchia*, as against one in the previous catalogues, among them being an edition printed at Basle in 1557. But this edition, like the 1584 edition of the *Commedia*, is

<sup>1</sup> See "An Apocryphal Venice edition of the *Divina Commedia*," in *Bulletin Italien*, vii. 85-86.

non-existent, the *editio princeps* of the *De Monarchia*, of which a copy is included in the list, having, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> been published at Basle in 1559. Hyde's list is further noteworthy as including for the first time a copy of the *Convivio*, the edition being the latest at that date, namely, the third Venice edition (1531).

In 1746 appeared the first Oxford specimen of translation from the *Commedia*. This was in the shape of an anonymous poetical rendering of *Inferno* xxiv. 1-18, contributed to the second number (April 12, 1746) of Dodsley's *Museum*, under the title of "The Three First Stanzas of the 24th Canto of Dante's *Inferno*"<sup>2</sup> made into a Song, In Imitation of the Earl of Surry's Stile." The author of this composition, which is a decidedly pleasing performance, as was revealed incidentally fifty years later by Joseph Warton in the fourth volume<sup>3</sup> of his edition of Pope (1797), was Joseph Spence, Fellow of New College, formerly Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1728-1738), and at that time Regius Professor of Modern History.

Ten years later (in 1756) Joseph Warton, who was a member of Oriel College, and Second Master of Winchester, published in the first volume of his *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* a prose rendering of part of the Ugolino episode from *Inferno* xxxiii. 43-75, in which, as the translator explains in a note, in order that none of the pathos

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Printed *Inferna*.

<sup>3</sup> P. 283.



should be missed, "it was thought not improper to distinguish the more moving passages by italics."

The next attempt in this line emanating from Oxford was a version in heroic couplets of the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the eleventh canto of the *Purgatorio*, which was printed anonymously in 1760 in the first volume (No. 5) of the *British Magazine*. A special interest attaches to this piece, inasmuch as it was published as a specimen of a completed translation of the whole poem. The author was William Huggins, a Fellow of Magdalen, who at his death in 1761 left the MS. of this translation to his executors, with directions that it should be published, funds being allocated for the purpose and his portrait by Hogarth having been engraved for the frontispiece. But his wishes were disregarded, and the work never saw the light, with the consequence that Huggins and his Alma Mater have been deprived of the credit of producing the first complete English translation of the *Commedia*—a distinction which is commonly claimed for Henry Boyd, of Dublin University, whose version was not published till more than forty years after Huggins's death.

In 1781 Thomas Warton, Fellow and Tutor of Trinity, younger brother of Joseph Warton, and a former Professor of Poetry (1757-1767), published the third volume of his *History of English Poetry*, in which he gave a lengthy "general view" of the *Divina Commedia*, with numerous quotations from the original, and prose renderings of the inscription over

the Gate of Hell (*Inf.* iii. 1-9), and of the Ugolino episode. Warton's renderings can hardly be described as felicitous, for in the former passage he perpetrated an extraordinary mistranslation, involving a "bull" of the first water, the last line but one being rendered, "if not eternal, I shall eternally remain"; while in his account of Ugolino he credits the Count and his victim, the Archbishop, with the remarkable feat of simultaneously "gnawing each other's skulls."

In the last decade of the eighteenth century the name appears for the first time in connexion with Dante of Henry Francis Cary, of Christ Church, the most widely known of all English translators of the *Commedia*. On May 7, 1792, while still an undergraduate, he writes from Oxford to Miss Seward at Lichfield, advising her to "give a few months to the acquisition of Italian," and to "go and see the wonders of Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*"; and he sends her a prose translation of two passages from the *Purgatorio*, as being "less known than the *Inferno*," namely, the simile of the sheep from the third canto (vv. 79-85), and of the meteors from the fifth (vv. 37-39).

Five years later, in January 1797, Cary records in his journal that he began work on his blank verse translation, the work which was destined to link his name lastingly with that of Dante.

In a letter of September 27, 1800, to Rev. Robert Fellowes, of St. Mary Hall, Miss Seward quotes the opinion on Dante of an Oxford dignitary, Cyril

Jackson, Dean of Christ Church, namely, that "of all, in every age and nation, who have aspired to the name of poet, only four deserve it : Homer, Dante, Ariosto, and Shakespeare."

In 1805 the Bodleian Library purchased the MSS. of the classical scholar, James Philip D'Orville, among which was a MS. of the *Divina Commedia*, this being the first MS. of Dante acquired by the Library since the disappearance of Duke Humphrey's MS.<sup>1</sup> In the same year Cary published the first instalment of his translation, consisting of Cantos i.-xvii. of the *Inferno*, accompanied by the Italian text (now for the first time printed in England), with notes, and a life of Dante; the remaining seventeen cantos being published in the following year.

About the year 1810, Dr. George Frederick Nott, Fellow of All Souls, and Prebendary of Winchester, an accomplished Italian scholar, gave a commission to the Viennese artist, Josef Anton Koch (1768-1839), to make a series of drawings from the *Divina Commedia*, forty of which, in sepia, illustrating the *Inferno* and part of the *Purgatorio*, eventually passed into the possession of King John of Saxony, the well-known translator of the *Commedia* into German, under the pseudonym of Philalethes, and are now preserved at Dresden. Nott's library, which was sold at Winchester in 1842, the year after his death, contained a large and valuable collection of Dante literature, including three MSS. of the *Commedia*, a MS. of Boccaccio's *Vita*

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 40-1.



*di Dante*, and upwards of eighty printed editions of the *Commedia*, among them the *editio princeps* (Foligno, 1472), and six other fifteenth-century editions, besides several editions of the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*, including the *editio princeps* (Florence, 1576) of the former, as well as the first collected edition of the *Epistolæ*, namely, that privately printed by Witte at Padua in 1827.

On May 8, 1812, Cary noted in his journal that he on that day finished his translation of the *Commedia*, on which he had been engaged off and on for some fifteen years. But it was not until the beginning of 1814 that the work at last made its appearance in three diminutive volumes, printed at Cary's own expense, under the title of "*The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise of Dante Alighieri*, translated by the Rev. H. F. Cary, A.M." Among the earliest notes of appreciation was one from Oxford, from the Public Orator, William Crowe, Fellow and Tutor of New College, whose eulogy, writes Cary to a friend, was "couched in such a strain of compliment as my modesty will not let me repeat."

In the same year (1814) a member of Balliol College published anonymously a volume of *Poetical Epistles*, which contained, among other translations, a rendering of the Ugolino episode in Spenserian stanzas, the first attempt at translation from the *Commedia* in this metre. The author was Robert Morehead, who subsequently contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* (December 1818) an interesting article on the poetical

character of Dante, and who in the following year (1819) printed anonymously in the *Edinburgh Magazine* two further attempts in Spenserian stanzas from the *Inferno*, namely, the inscription over the Gate of Hell (*Inf.* iii. 1-9), and the account of the frozen lake of Cocytus (*Inf.* xxxii. 1-39).

The next name on the record is of one whose connexion with Oxford in his lifetime was tragically brief, namely, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who entered University College in October, 1810, and was expelled in the following March, in consequence of having circulated a pamphlet on the *Necessity of Atheism*—a sentence which was reversed in our own day, the counterfeit presentment of the poet being now an object of reverence within the walls from which he himself had been driven out in disgrace. Shelley was a close student of Dante,<sup>1</sup> whose influence is traceable in many of his poems, notably in parts of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), in *Epipsychidion* (1821), and in the unfinished *Triumph of Life* (1822). The noble tributes to Dante in his *Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients relative to the Subject of Love* (1818), and in his *Defence of Poetry* (1821) are well known. His love of translation and of metrical experiments found scope in several renderings from the *Commedia* and *Canzoniere* of Dante, the earliest of which, a

<sup>1</sup> His annotated copy of the Venice 1793 edition of the *Opere di Dante* (5 vols.), containing the *Commedia*, *Canzoniere*, and prose works (Italian and Latin), was in the collection of the late Lord Abinger, which was dispersed in February 1920.

translation of the sonnet to Guido Cavalcanti (" Guido, vorrei "), known as the " Boat of Love," appears to have been written in 1816. Other pieces, assigned to the year 1820, are the canzone (" Voi che intendendo ") prefixed to the second book of the *Convivio* ; " Matilda gathering flowers," a rendering in *terza rima* of *Purgatorio* xxviii. 1-51 ; and a composite version with Medwin, if Medwin is to be believed, of part of the Ugolino episode, also in *terza rima*.

The year 1817 was signalised by one of the most important events in the annals of the Bodleian, an event of special interest in view of our immediate subject, namely, the purchase from Venice (for £5,444) of the great Canonici collection of MSS., numbering over 2,000. Of these 295 were Italian, among which were no less than fifteen Dante MSS., fourteen of the *Commedia*, and one containing the *Vita Nuova*, *Convivio*, and *Canzoniere*. An elaborate catalogue of this section of the collection was compiled some thirty years later at Oxford by Count Alessandro Mortara, which was seen through the press by Dr. Wellesley, Principal of New Inn Hall, and eventually published at Oxford in 1864. By this purchase the Bodleian Library became possessed of the richest collection of Dante MSS. in England, its total being sixteen, as against nine in the British Museum at this date.

In 1819 a second edition of Cary's *Dante* was published, in response to a popular demand, stimulated by a eulogistic reference to the work by Coleridge



in a lecture in London, and by a highly appreciative article in the *Edinburgh Review*. This edition, which, in marked contrast to the insignificant first edition, was in three handsome octavo volumes, was followed by a third in 1831, and by a fourth, in a single volume, the last superintended by Cary himself, in 1844, the year of his death.

In 1824, the year after his retirement from public life, Lord Grenville, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, formerly of Christ Church, Prime Minister in the administration of "All the Talents" (1806-1807), who had won the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse forty-five years before (1779), printed privately at Oxford a volume of Greek and Latin verse, chiefly translations, entitled *Nugæ Metricæ*, among which was a rendering in Latin elegiacs of *Paradiso* xvii. 55-60. Some years previously, as Rogers records in his *Commonplace Book*, Lord Grenville had made a rendering in English verse of another passage from the *Commedia*, namely, Dante's address to Virgil in *Inferno* i. 79-80, 82-84.

In 1826 another Latin verse prizeman, John Latham, Fellow of All Souls, while in residence at Oxford, translated in *terza rima* the Ugolino episode (*Inf.* xxxiii. 1-75), which was afterwards included in a volume of *Poems, Original and Translated*, published in 1836 at Sandbach in Cheshire.

In the following year (1827) Charles Strong, Fellow of Wadham, published anonymously *Specimens of Sonnets from the most celebrated Italian Poets, with*

*Translations*,<sup>1</sup> in which Dante was represented by a verse rendering of Sonnet xxiv. ("Deh pellegrini") from the *Vita Nuova* (§ 41).

In 1833 appeared the first instalment, the *Inferno*, with introduction and notes, of a new Oxford translation of the *Commedia*, in bastard *terza rima*. This was by Ichabod Charles Wright, late Fellow of Magdalen. The *Inferno*, of which a second edition was issued in the same year, was dedicated to Lord Brougham, as "one of the most ardent admirers of Dante." The *Purgatorio*, dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Howley, formerly Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, followed in 1836; and the *Paradiso*, dedicated to the translator's father-in-law, Lord Denman, Lord Chief Justice, in 1840. A collective edition in three volumes was published in 1845, and another in a single volume in 1854.

In 1835 William Ewart Gladstone, former student of Christ Church, at that time Conservative M.P. for Newark, made a translation in *terza rima* of *Purgatorio* xi. 1-21 ("The Lord's Prayer"), and *Paradiso* iii. 70-87 ("Speech of Piccarda"), which, together with a rendering in the same metre of *Inferno* xxxiii. 1-78 ("Ugolino"), made in 1837, was published in 1861 in a volume of *Translations by Lord Lyttelton and Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone*, the translator, who had been elected an honorary Fellow of All Souls three years before (1858), being then

<sup>1</sup> A certain number of copies, with new title-page, on which the author's name was given, were issued in the same year.

Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's second administration.

In 1840 the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Rev. John Keble, late Fellow of Oriel, devoted one of his Latin lectures during his second tenure of the professorship to an appreciation of Dante as the poet of the *Commedia*, "Florentinum illum triplici carmine nobilem," and drew a parallel between him and Lucretius in respect of his love for the mysterious and infinite, "ea quæ obscura sunt et infinita."

In 1843 was published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, by "a Graduate of Oxford." The second volume, also anonymous, followed three years later (1846). It was an open secret that the author was John Ruskin, lately a gentleman-commoner at Christ Church, who had graduated in 1842. In the first volume Dante is not mentioned. In the second the writer's enthusiasm for the poet of the *Divina Commedia* is a marked feature. From one point of view Dante ranks with Phidias and Michael Angelo,<sup>1</sup> from another with Homer, Æschylus, and Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> The last line of Francesca's narrative (*Inf.* v. 138) is singled out for special appreciation<sup>3</sup>; while the comment on Dante's account of the purifying flame at the beginning of *Purgatorio* xxvi., with the summing up, "it is lambent annihilation,"<sup>4</sup> has become famous. It was during a visit to Italy in 1845 that Ruskin first made himself acquainted with the *Commedia*<sup>5</sup>; and

<sup>1</sup> i. ch. 7.

<sup>2</sup> ii. ch. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See Epilogue to vol. ii. of the 1883 ed. of *Modern Painters*.



from that time forth, for many years, no book, with the exception of the Bible, was his more constant companion, either in the original or in Cary's translation. To no single author, perhaps, was his debt greater than to Dante. In a well-known passage in the third volume of the *Stones of Venice*, published in 1853, he writes<sup>1</sup>: "I think that the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante." There can be no doubt that Ruskin's whole-hearted appreciation of the *Commedia*, so insistently and so eloquently expressed in his numerous works, has played no small part in awakening and stimulating the widespread interest in this country in the study of Dante.

The year 1843 saw the issue of the fifth printed Bodleian catalogue, in which were registered thirteen editions of the *Divina Commedia*, as against four in the third (1674) and fourth (1738) catalogues; of these, seven were of the fifteenth century, including the *editio princeps* (Foligno, 1472), and the first Florentine edition (1481), and six of the sixteenth, including the two Aldines (1502, 1515); besides these were the first editions of the *De Monarchia* (1559), and of the *Vita Nuova* (1576); this last work now appearing for the first time on a Bodleian list.

In this same year (1843) was published a translation in *terza rima* of the *Inferno*, by John Dayman, formerly Fellow of Corpus, this being the first com-

<sup>1</sup> § 67.

plete English version of any of the three divisions of the *Commedia* in the metre of the original. More than twenty years later, on the occasion of the celebration of the sixth centenary of the birth of Dante in 1865, Dayman published a translation of the whole poem in the same metre; but he was not first in the field on this occasion, no less than three other *terza rima* versions having already appeared, namely, those of C. B. Cayley, J. W. Thomas, and Mrs. Ramsay.

In January 1850 an anonymous article was published in the *Christian Remembrancer* (the successor of the *British Critic*), which purported to be a review of John Carlyle's prose translation of the *Inferno*. It was, in fact, an exhaustive and illuminating essay on Dante and his works, written with consummate literary skill by one whose knowledge of the subject was unrivalled. The author of this essay, which has come to be regarded as one of the classics of Dante literature, was Rev. Richard William Church, Fellow of Oriel, subsequently (1871) Dean of St. Paul's. The article was reprinted in a volume of Church's *Essays and Reviews* in 1854, and again separately, with his son's translation of the *De Monarchia*, in 1879, on which occasion Dean Church took the opportunity of expressing regret for his neglect of the work which had stood at the head of his article, a neglect which was partly responsible for Carlyle's abandonment of his intention to publish a translation of the whole poem.

In 1855 Henry Hart Milman, Dean of St. Paul's,

formerly Fellow of Brasenose, published his *magnum opus*, the *History of Latin Christianity*, in which necessarily Dante and his works figure conspicuously. In the seventh volume several pages are devoted to the idealism of the *De Monarchia*, and in the ninth is a lengthy dissertation on the relation of the *Divina Commedia* to the popular traditions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. In the same volume Milman dwells on the "singular kindred and similitude" which to his mind existed between Tacitus and Dante, "between the last great Latin and the first great Italian writer, though one is a poet and the other a historian."

In 1861 Rev. Samuel Henry Reynolds, Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose, contributed to the January number of the *Westminster Review* an anonymous article on "Dante and his English Translators," which was subsequently (1898) reprinted in a collection of his essays entitled *Studies on Many Subjects*. A passage in this article gives an interesting view of the state of Dante studies in England at that date. "Dante," says the writer, "is certainly more studied now than he has been for very long. Translations, particularly of the *Inferno*, are numerous and widely circulated; criticisms, some of them of a very high order, have occasionally appeared; and allusions to his writings may be detected not infrequently in portions of our floating literature. But the change, whatever its cause may be, has been quite recent: it would hardly be untrue to say that there is more of Dante's influence traceable in Chaucer's poems—more genuine



evidence that Dante had been read and loved—than in the whole body of English literature (Milton's writings alone excepted) from Chaucer's time to our own."

In 1863 Matthew Arnold, formerly Fellow of Oriel, at that time Professor of Poetry, printed in *Fraser's Magazine* an essay on "Dante and Beatrice," which was devoted mainly to an examination of the theory of the relations between Dante and Beatrice propounded by Theodore Martin in the introduction to his translation of the *Vita Nuova* published in the previous year.

In 1864 James Bryce, Fellow of Oriel, published as an amplification of the essay which had won the Arnold Historical Prize the year before, his now famous work, *The Holy Roman Empire*, which claims mention here in virtue of the masterly analysis, in the fifteenth chapter, of Dante's *De Monarchia*, that book which, with the death of the Emperor Henry VII and the doom of the Empire in Italy, was fated, as the essayist puts it, to become "an epitaph instead of a prophecy."

In the following year (1865), which was the six-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante, Dayman, as we have seen, brought out his *terza rima* translation of the whole of the *Commedia*, in commemoration of the centenary. With the same object, Rev. James Ford, Prebendary of Exeter, formerly of Oriel College, published a *terza rima* translation of the *Inferno*, as the first instalment of a rendering in the same metre

of the whole poem, which was published in 1870. In 1865 also a subject relating to Dante was selected for the Latin verse prize at Oxford, namely, "Dantis Exsilium," the prizeman being R. B. Michell, of Balliol. Two years later (1867) the Gaisford prize for Greek verse was won by A. M. Bell, of Balliol, with a poem on "Dante Poeta apud Inferos."

In 1871 Ernest Ridsdale Ellaby, Fellow of Wadham, published a translation in irregular verse of the first ten cantos of the *Inferno*, of which a revised edition was printed in 1874. In the preface to the latter it was stated that other cantos had been translated, which it was hoped to publish, but no more appeared. In 1872 was published the well-known *Introduction to the Study of Dante* by John Addington Symonds, formerly Fellow of Magdalen, a second edition of which was issued in 1890. In the years 1873-1874 Rev. Mandell Creighton, Fellow of Merton, subsequently Bishop of Peterborough (1891-1897), and of London (1897-1901), published in *Macmillan's Magazine* two essays on "Dante, his Life, his Writings," which were reprinted in 1902, after his death, in a volume of his *Historical Essays and Reviews*.

In 1874 the Clarendon Press for the first time published a work upon Dante, in the shape of a volume of *Selections from the "Inferno,"* edited, with introduction and notes, by H. B. Cotterill—a pioneer volume, which was destined to be the forerunner of a notable series of books upon Dante from the University Press.

In 1875 E. D. A. Morshead, Fellow of New College, printed privately at Winchester an essay on Dante, which had been read before the New College Essay Society in that year. This essay was accompanied by sundry verse translations from the *Commedia*, four of which, including the episodes of Francesca da Rimini (*Inf.* v. 70-142), Ulysses (*Inf.* xxvi. 85-142), and Ugolino (*Inf.* xxxiii. 1-75), were in Spenserian stanzas, a metre which Morshead adopted for the rendering of other passages printed at intervals in subsequent years in the *Oxford Magazine*, viz., "Dante and Casella" (*Purg.* ii. 55-133) in 1884 (February 20); "Manfred of Sicily" (*Purg.* iii. 91-145) in 1885 (February 25); and "Virgil and Statius" (*Purg.* xxii. 55-112) in 1904 (March 2).

The year 1876 was marked by an event of primary importance from the point of view of the subject here dealt with, namely, the founding by Rev. Edward Moore, Principal of St. Edmund Hall, in conjunction with Signor de Tivoli, Taylorian Teacher in Italian, Rev. H. F. Tozer of Exeter, Rev. G. W. Kitchen of Christ Church, and Rev. R. G. Livingstone of Pembroke, of the Oxford Dante Society—an event which gave an impulse to the study of Dante in Oxford, and consequentially far beyond the limits of Oxford, that has lasted unimpaired to the present day, as the succeeding pages of this record bear witness.

In 1877 the Taylorian Institution acquired by purchase from Naples for £30 a Cent. XV. MS. of the *Paradiso*, with the Italian commentary of Fran-



cesco da Buti, which had formerly belonged to Pope Pius VI, whose arms are on the binding.<sup>1</sup>

In 1879 a former scholar of New College, F. J. Church, son of Dean Church, published a translation of the *De Monarchia*, the first English translation of this treatise, which, as has already been mentioned, was reprinted in the same year in a volume containing his father's essay on Dante. In this year also Baron Seymour Kirkup, to whom the world is indebted for the preservation, by means of his tracing and subsequent drawing, of the portrait of Dante in the Bargello at Florence, presented to the Oxford Dante Society a cast from a mask of Dante in his possession which had been given to him by the sculptor Bartolini.<sup>2</sup>

In 1880 Dr. Moore, Principal of St. Edmund Hall, purchased from Rome a Cent. XV. MS. of the *Divina Commedia*, and a Cent. XV. MS. of the *Convivio*, the latter being one of the only three complete MSS. of that treatise in this country.<sup>3</sup>

In 1881 Canon Liddon, of Christ Church, Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis, contributed to the Proceedings of the Oxford Dante Society a paper on "Dante and Aquinas," which was followed by a

<sup>1</sup> See Moore's *Contributions to the Textual Criticism of the "Divina Commedia,"* pp. 549-550.

<sup>2</sup> This cast is now exhibited in the Picture Gallery at the Bodleian, in association with the collection of portraits, busts, and masks of Dante presented by Dr. Paget Toynbee in 1917.

<sup>3</sup> See Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 550-552; and *Studies in Dante*, iv., pp. 130-131. After Dr. Moore's death (in 1916) these two MSS. passed by his bequest to the Bodleian Library.

second on the same subject in 1883, and by a third on "Dante and the Franciscans" in 1888—contributions which were subsequently printed in a volume of his *Essays and Addresses*, published in 1892, after his death. In 1882 C. L. Shadwell, Fellow of Oriel, translated in Marvellian stanzas the episode of Ulysses from *Inferno* xxvi. 90–142,<sup>1</sup> by way of experiment with this metre, with a view to its adoption for a translation of the *Purgatorio*.

In 1883 the Dean of Wells, Dr. Plumptre, formerly Fellow of Brasenose, who in December 1881 had published "Two Studies in Dante" in the *Contemporary Review*, printed, as "samples of a new translation," a rendering in *terza rima* of the first four cantos of the *Inferno*, together with the episodes of Francesca and Ugolino. In the following year he contributed an article on "The *Purgatorio* of Dante: a Study in Autobiography," to the September number of the *Contemporary Review*; and in 1886–1887 he published two substantial volumes, the fruits of thirty years' labour, containing a translation of the *Commedia* (in *terza rima*) and *Canzoniere* of Dante, accompanied by notes, essays, and a biographical introduction, constituting the most solid and comprehensive contribution to the study of Dante which had yet appeared in this country. Dean Plumptre was one of the most ardent upholders of the belief that Dante visited England and studied at Oxford, attracted thither, as he sup-

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *In the Footprints of Dante*, ed. Paget Toynbee, London, 1907.

posed, by the reputation of Roger Bacon. He even persuaded himself, on the strength of the mentions of clockwork in *Paradiso* x. 139 ff. and xxiv. 13 ff., that Dante may have wandered as far west as Glastonbury (where was then the famous clock now in Wells Cathedral), and may have "worshipped within the walls of my own cathedral."

In 1886 Dr. Moore was appointed to the Barlow Lectureship on Dante at University College, London, the first-fruits of which were published in the following year in a volume on the *Time-References in the "Divina Commedia."* In 1887 F. K. H. Haselfoot (formerly Cock), of University College, Oxford, who claimed to know the whole of the *Commedia* in the original by heart, published a translation of the poem in *terza rima*, with notes, of which a revised edition was issued in 1899.

In 1889 was published by the Cambridge University Press Dr. Moore's monumental work, *Contributions to the Textual Criticism of the "Divina Commedia,"* which comprised the text of the *Inferno* with collations of all the MSS. at Oxford and Cambridge, an account of each of the MSS. examined and collated, numbering between 200 and 300, and a separate collation of about 180 carefully selected test passages from each of the three cantiche of the poem. This work, which at once placed Dr. Moore in the front rank of living Dantists, was the first serious attempt that had been made in England or elsewhere to deal scientifically and methodically with the complicated



problems presented by the text of the *Commedia*, and it is still the chief authority on the subject. In an appendix to this volume was printed a valuable essay by Rev. H. F. Tozer, Fellow of Exeter, which had originally been read before the Oxford Dante Society, on "The Principles of Metre and Scansion Observed by Dante in the *Divina Commedia*."

In November of this same year Dr. John Henry Bridges, former Fellow of Oriel, delivered a lecture on "Dante's Position in the History of Humanity," one of a series in illustration of the Positivist Calendar of Great Men, in which Dante is acclaimed as "the herald of the wider and loftier Church of which the foundations are already laid, and which the coming centuries will complete." In a previous lecture on "Love the Principle," addressed to the Positivist Society in October 1888, which, with the above, was printed in a volume of his *Essays and Addresses* (1907), Bridges embodied a prose translation, with comments, of Dante's conception of love, as explained in *Purgatorio* xvii. 91-139, a translation which the late Provost of Oriel (Dr. Shadwell) was wont to quote as a model of "what can be done by a real scholar in reproducing the language of a foreign poet so that it shall read like an original work." The year 1889 saw also the publication by Hon. W. W. Vernon, of Christ Church, of his *Readings on the "Purgatorio"* (second edition, 1897; third, 1907), based mainly on the Latin Commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, which had been published at Florence two years before, under the editorship of

Sir James Lacaïta, at Mr. Vernon's expense. *Readings on the "Inferno"* followed in 1894 (second edition, 1906), and *Readings on the "Paradiso"* in 1900 (second edition, 1909).

In 1890 Dr. Moore published a second series of his Barlow lectures in the shape of a volume on *Dante and his Early Biographers*; and from this date onwards, on an average, one or more volumes on Dante (to say nothing of articles in weekly, monthly, or quarterly periodicals too numerous to specify) have been published annually, either by Oxford scholars, or by the University Press on behalf of scholars not connected with Oxford. In 1892 C. L. Shadwell, of Oriel, printed the first instalment (cantos i.-xxvii.) of his translation of the *Purgatorio* in Marvellian stanzas, with an introduction by Walter Pater, Fellow of Brasenose. In the same year Mr. Gladstone once more discussed the question "Did Dante Study in Oxford?" in the June number of the *Nineteenth Century Magazine*,<sup>1</sup> his conclusion being in the affirmative. In this year also R. R. Whitehead, of Balliol, printed privately at the Chiswick Press, for the first time in England, the Italian text of the *Vita Nuova*, with introduction and notes. In the next year G. Musgrave, of St. John's, published a translation of the *Inferno* in Spenserian stanzas, the only version of any of the three cantiche in this metre.

<sup>1</sup> In this article Gladstone makes the extraordinary blunder of putting into the mouth of Sordello the speech of Nessus in *Inferno* xii. 119-120.

In 1894 the Clarendon Press published, under the editorship of Dr. Moore, an edition in one volume of the whole works of Dante, with index of proper names, etc., compiled by Paget Toynbee, of Balliol—the now well-known “Oxford Dante.” Of this work, which was the first, and until the publication of Barbèra’s edition at Florence in 1919, the only, single-volume edition of Dante’s works, a second edition was published in 1897, and a third, very considerably revised, in 1904.

In 1895 C. H. St. John Hornby, of New College, printed at his own private Ashendene Press an edition of the *Vita Nuova*, which he followed up with editions of great beauty of the *Inferno* in 1902, the *Purgatorio* in 1904, the *Paradiso* in 1905, and the *Ashendene Dante*, a folio reprint of the “Oxford Dante,” with woodcuts, in 1909, editions from the typographical point of view worthy to be ranked with some of the finest productions of the Cinquecento.

In 1896 Dr. Moore, who in the previous year had been appointed Taylorian lecturer on Dante at Oxford, a lectureship which was created for him, and which he held for three years, published the first series of his *Studies in Dante*, consisting largely, as did the subsequent volumes, of articles which he had contributed to the *Quarterly*, *Edinburgh*, and other reviews. A second series followed in 1899, a third in 1903, and a fourth in 1917, the year after his death. The most important articles were those on Scripture and classical authors in Dante, with elaborate indices,



in the first series; the discussion of the genuineness of the *Quæstio de Aqua et Terra*, in the second; the astronomy and geography of Dante, and the discussion of the genuineness of the Letter to Can Grande, in the third; and the textual criticism of the *Convivio*, in the fourth—the whole collection, covering as it does practically the entire range of Dante's writings, constituting probably the most considerable and the most weighty contribution to the critical study of Dante due to any one author.

In the *Quarterly Review* for July 1896 there appeared a remarkable essay by the Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, Rev. John Earle, of Oriel, containing what is in many respects a wholly original view of the interpretation of the *Vita Nuova*. In this essay, which was an amplification of a paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, and which was subsequently translated into Italian, Prof. Earle held that Dante deliberately composed the *Vita Nuova* as a preliminary to the *Divina Commedia*, in order to be able to introduce Beatrice, his central figure in the latter, as a personality already familiar to his readers—an ingenious theory, which attracted considerable attention at the time, but which has not met with acceptance from Dante scholars.

In 1897 E. H. Pember, Q.C., of Christ Church, printed privately a volume of poems (*Adrastus of Phrygia*) in which was included a blank-verse translation of *Paradiso* xv. A translation, in the same metre, of *Purgatorio* viii. was printed in a second volume

(*The Death-Song of Themyris*) in 1899; and of the first four cantos of the *Inferno* in a third (*The Finding of Pheidippides*) in 1901. A translation of *Purgatorio* xxviii.—xxxiii. (*The Earthly Paradise*) was completed a few years later, but was never printed.

In 1898 the Clarendon Press published a *Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante*, by Paget Toynbee, of Balliol, much of the material for which had been published during the preceding ten years in a number of articles contributed to the *Academy*, the *Athenæum*, *Romania*, the *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, and the Annual Reports of the Cambridge (U.S.A.) Dante Society.

In the following year Dr. Shadwell published the second instalment (cantos xxviii.—xxxiii.) of his translation of the *Purgatorio* in Marvellian stanzas, with an introduction by Prof. Earle.

The sixth centenary, in 1900, of the assumed date of Dante's Vision, was commemorated by the publication, under Oxford editorship, of two editions of the *Divina Commedia*, in honour of the occasion, the first being a revision of Witte's text, edited by Paget Toynbee, the other a reissue in large type by the Clarendon Press of the Oxford text, edited by Dr. Moore, with revised index of proper names by Paget Toynbee. In the same year the latter published a *Life of Dante*, of which a second edition was published in 1901, a third in 1904, which was translated into Italian in 1908, and a fourth, considerably enlarged, in 1910.

In 1901 the Clarendon Press published an *English Commentary on the "Divina Commedia,"* by the Rev. H. F. Tozer, of Exeter; and in the following year *The Troubadours of Dante*, by Rev. H. J. Chaytor, of All Souls. In that year (1902) also was published Dr. Toynbee's *Dante Studies and Researches*, the chief contents of which appeared in Italian at Bologna in 1899 and 1904. In the latter year the Clarendon Press published a prose translation of the *Divina Commedia*, by Rev. H. F. Tozer; and Dr. James Williams, Fellow of Lincoln, printed privately *Thoughts on Dante*, containing a *terza rima* translation of the Francesca episode, which was followed two years later by the publication at Oxford of *Dante as a Jurist*, the expansion of an article in the *Law Magazine and Review* for February 1897.

In the year 1905 there appeared at Oxford an important contribution to Dantesque literature, which, though not the work of Oxford scholars, is entitled to a place in this record as having been printed and published by the Clarendon Press, namely, the Concordance of the Italian Prose Works and *Canzoniere* of Dante, which was compiled by members of the Cambridge (U.S.A). Dante Society on the initiative of the late Professor C. E. Norton. This volume, it may be observed, and the companion Concordance of the Latin Works of Dante, produced in like conditions, and likewise published at Oxford (in 1912), owe no inconsiderable part of their value as works of reference to the 'Oxford Dante,' upon which they are



dependent for the line-references to the prose works. In the years 1905-1906 H. B. Garrod, formerly Postmaster of Merton, delivered a series of lectures on Dante in London in connexion with University extension, which with others were published in 1913, after his death.

During the next few years there is little to record of Oxford achievement in the field of Dante beyond occasional articles in periodicals, till we come to 1909, which, by way of compensation, proved exceptionally fruitful. In that year the Clarendon Press published a translation of the *Convivio*, by Dr. W. W. Jackson, Rector of Exeter; a critical text and translation of the *Quæstio de Aqua et Terra*, by Dr. Shadwell, Provost of Oriel; and *The Moral System of Dante's Inferno*, by W. H. V. Reade, of Keble. The same year saw the publication of *Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary*, in two volumes, by Dr. Toynbee, the introduction to which had previously appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* (April 1908), and has since been translated into Italian; *The Use of Dante as an Illustrator of Scripture*, by Rev. Sir John Hawkins, Bart., of Oriel; and a *Handbook to the Works of Dante*, by F. J. Snell, of Balliol.

In January 1912 Dr. Toynbee published in the *Modern Language Review* the first of a series of twelve articles on the Letters of Dante, of which the last appeared in July 1919, with a view to a critical edition of the *Epistolæ*. In 1913 Dante's *De Monarchia* was taken as the text of the Romanes Lecture on "The

Imperial Peace, an Ideal in European History," by Sir W. M. Ramsay, former Fellow of Exeter and Lincoln, and Professor of Classical Archæology and Art at Oxford. In this year Oriel College received by donation from Miss Church the Dante books of her father, the late Dean Church, a former Fellow. In 1914 the Clarendon Press published Dr. Toynbee's *Concise Dante Dictionary*; and in 1916 a reprint of the Oxford text of the *De Monarchia*, with an introduction on the Political Theory of Dante, by W. H. V. Reade. In the previous year was published Dr. Shadwell's translation of the *Paradiso* in Marvellian stanzas, with an introduction by Dr. J. W. Mackail, former Fellow of Balliol, and Professor of Poetry.

In 1916 the Bodleian received two Dante MSS., one of the *Commedia* (Cent. XV.), the other of the *Convivio* (Cent. XV.), by bequest from Dr. Moore, late Principal of St. Edmund Hall; and 350 volumes of editions of Dante's works as a donation from Dr. Toynbee, who in the following year presented a collection of portraits, busts, and masks of Dante, and about 600 volumes of editions, commentaries, and translations of Dante. By Dr. Moore's bequest also Queen's College received his valuable Dante library, an accession, it may be hoped, which will serve to keep alive in Oxford the studies to which he devoted so many years of his life.

In 1917 Hon. W. W. Vernon, of Christ Church, printed privately a volume of lectures on Dante, entitled *Dante and his Times*; and in the same year

was published by the Clarendon Press the last series, the fourth, of Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante*. The record closes with the publication by the Clarendon Press in 1920 of Dr. Toynbee's edition, with critical text and translation, of the *Epistolæ*; and the issue at Oxford of the privately printed *Record of the Oxford Dante Society*, as a contribution to the sexcentenary celebration.

If Oxford may not claim the honour of having welcomed Dante in person, according to the fond belief of Giovanni da Serravalle, and of Dean Plumptre and Mr. Gladstone, she can console herself with the thought that the first recorded copy in England of his immortal poem came to Oxford, and that with his other works, as the foregoing pages abundantly testify, it has been the object of "*lungo studio e grande amore*," not wholly unfruitful, on the part of many generations of her sons.



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# THE LAST VOYAGE OF ULYSSES

LAURENCE BINYON.

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## THE LAST VOYAGE OF ULYSSES

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### INFERNO, CANTO XXVI. l. 52.

Who is in that fire which comes so torn in twain  
As if it rose out of the pyre that hearsed  
Eteocles beside his brother slain ?  
He answered me : Ulysses there is cursed  
And with him Diomed ; as in wrath erewhile  
Together, so together now amerced.  
They in their flame, tormented for old guile,  
Bemoan the horse, whose wooden ambuscade  
The gentle seed of Romans did exile.  
And they lament the fraud, whereby the shade  
Of Deidamia for Achilles rues ;  
And for Palladium stolen are they paid.  
If they within those sparks a voice can use,  
Master, I said, I pray thee of thy grace—  
A thousand times I pray thee, if thou refuse—  
Forbid me not to tarry in this place  
Till that the hornèd flame blow hitherward ;  
See, toward it how the longing bends my face !  
And he to me : The thing thou hast implored  
Deserveth praise, and for that cause thy need  
Is answered ; yet refrain thy tongue from word.  
Leave me to speak, for well thy wish I read.  
But they, since they were Greeks, might turn aside,  
It may be, and thy voice disdain to heed.



When that the fire had come where to my Guide  
Time and the place seemed fit, I heard him frame  
His speech upon this manner, as he cried :  
O ye who are two within a single flame,  
If any merit I of you have won,  
If merit, much or little, had my name,  
When the great verse I made beneath the sun,  
Move not, but let the one of you who can  
Tell where he went to perish, being undone.  
The greater horn of the ancient flame began  
To shudder and make a murmur, like a fire  
When the wind troubles it with gusty fan,  
Then carrying its crests, to and fro, higher,  
As it had been a tongue that spoke, it cast  
A voice forth from the strength of its desire,  
Saying : When I from Circe got me at last,  
Who more than a year by Gaeta (before  
Æneas had so named it) held me fast,  
Neither sweet son, nor old fond father, nor  
The long-due love which was to have made glad  
Penelope for all the pain she bore,  
Could conquer the inward hunger that I had  
To master earth's experience, and to attain  
Knowledge of man's mind, both the good and bad.  
But I put out on the deep open main  
With one ship only, and with that little band  
Which chose not to desert me ; far as Spain,  
Far as Morocco, either shore I scanned ;  
Sardinia's isle I coasted, steering straight,  
And the isles of which that water bathes the strand.

I and my crew were old and over-late  
When, at the narrow pass, we could discern  
The towers that Hercules set for a gate  
That none should dare beyond, or farther learn.  
Already I had Seville on the right,  
And on the larboard Ceuta lay astern.  
Brothers, I said, who manfully, despite  
Ten thousand perils, have attained the West,  
In the brief vigil that remains of light  
To feel in, stoop not to renounce the quest  
Of what in the sun's path may be essayed,  
The world that never man-kind hath possessed.  
Think on the seed ye spring from ! Ye were made  
Not to live life of brute beasts of the field,  
But follow virtue and knowledge unafraid.  
With such few words their spirit so I steeled,  
That I thereafter scarce could have restrained  
My comrades from the voyage, had I willed ;  
And, our poop turned to where the Morning reigned,  
We made, for the mad flight, wings of our oars,  
And on the left continually we gained.  
By now the Night beheld within her course  
All stars of the other pole, and ours so low,  
It was not lifted from the ocean floors.  
Five times beneath the moon re-kindled slow  
The light had been, and quenched as oft, since we  
Broached the hard issue we were sworn to know,  
When there arose a Mountain in the sea,  
Dimm'd by the distance ; loftier than aught  
That ever I beheld, it seemed to be.

Then we rejoiced ; but soon to grief were brought.

A storm came out of the strange land, and found

The ship, and violently the fore-part caught.

Three times it made her to whirl round and round

With all the waves ; and, as Another chose,

The fourth time, heaved the poop up, the prow  
drowned,

Till over us we heard the waters close.



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# DANTE AS LITERARY CRITIC

EDMUND G. GARDNER.

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## DANTE AS LITERARY CRITIC

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THE literary criticism of the Middle Ages was naturally of a rudimentary character, and had in the main a practical tendency. It was directed towards teaching men how to speak well and write well, and how to compose poetry, rather than towards the æsthetic appreciation of works of art of the past. When such works were considered, it was normally from the point of view elucidated by Dante himself in the Letter to Can Grande.

But in this, as in so much else, Dante frequently soars beyond the ideas of his age, and, from an early stage in his career, approaches literary questions with those same "luci chiare ed acute" which were to penetrate so deeply into the mysteries of the human spirit in the *Divina Commedia*.

We find a short chapter of literary criticism in the *Vita Nuova*. Dante is justifying himself for making love a human personification by appealing to the example of the classical poets, who similarly personify inanimate things, and even things which have no real existence. He distinguishes between such classical poets, *poete litterati*, and the new vernacular poets, *poete volgari, dicitori per rima*: "chè dire per rima in volgare tanto è quanto dire per versi in latino,



secondo alcuna proporzione.” His summary account of previous romance poetry shows that his knowledge was at that time scanty, and his restriction of the matter of lyrical poetry to love is one that he will presently outgrow; but the rest of the chapter is legitimate and significant. “Onde, con ciò sia cosa che a li poete sia conceduta maggiore licenza di parlare che a li prosaici dittatori, e questi dicitore per rima non siano altro che poete volgari, degno e ragionevole è che a loro sia maggiore licenzia largita di parlare che a li altri parlatori volgari; onde, se alcuna figura o colore rettorico è conceduto a li poete, conceduto è a li rimatori.” If the *poete* have used these figures and rhetorical colours, *lo dicitore per rima* has a right to do the same: “ma non senza ragione alcuna, ma con ragione, la quale poi sia possibile d’aprire per prosa.” After citing passages from Virgil, Lucan, Horace and Ovid, he adds a warning against abuse of the practice: “Dico che nè li poete parlavano così senza ragione, nè quelli che rimano dèono parlare così, non avendo alcuno ragionamento in loro di quello che dicono; però che grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse cose sotto vesta di figura o di colore rettorico, e poscia, domandato, non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotale vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.”<sup>1</sup> It is at once a defence of the classical tradition in imagery and a plea for sincerity in literary art. Figures and rhetorical colour are allowable, not for their own sake, but when covering a

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Nuova* xxv.

real meaning which is capable of being expressed in prose.

The opening chapters of the *Convivio*, where Dante defends the writing of a prose treatise in the vernacular as a commentary upon his own canzoni, contain literary criticism of a higher order. Vernacular prose in Italy had not yet reached a stage of development comparable with that of the poetry, and he can justly say that “lo latino molte cose manifesta concepute nella mente, che il volgare fare non può,” and that its structure is more beautiful.<sup>1</sup> His long plea, nevertheless, for a vernacular rather than a Latin commentary, is based, as Dr. Wicksteed well notes, on the principle “that the atmosphere of the commentary should as much as possible harmonise with that of the text.” Incidentally, we have this notable passage on the translation of poetry into another language, anticipating, for English readers, what Shelley was to write in his *Defence of Poetry* :—

“E però sappia ciascuno, che nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può della sua loquela in altra trasmutare, senza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia. E questa è la ragione per che Omero non si mutò di greco in latino, come l’altre scritture che avemo da loro; e questa è la ragione per che i versi del Psaltero sono senza dolcezza di musica e d’armonia; chè essi furono trasmutati d’ebreo in greco, e di greco

<sup>1</sup> *Convivio* i. 5.

in latino, e nella prima trasmutazione tutta quella dolcezza venne meno.”<sup>1</sup>

*Must reject poetry* { Further, Dante has a most striking passage on the potentialities of Italian prose, which carries with it a corollary of more general application, for he implies that the real beauty and capacities of a language are to be tested by its prose rather than by its poetry :—

“Per questo comento la gran bontà del volgare di Sì si vedrà, però che (sì come per esso altissimi e novissimi concetti convenevolmente, sufficientemente e acconciamente, quasi come per esso latino, si esprimono) la sua virtù nelle cose rimate, per le accidentali adornezze che quivi sono connesse, cioè la rima e lo ritmo o'l numero regolato, non si può bene manifestare; sì come la bellezza d'una donna, quando gli adornamenti dell'azzimare e delle vestimenta la fanno più ammirare che essa medesima. Onde chi vuole bene giudicare d'una donna, guardi quella quando solo sua natural bellezza si sta con lei da tutto accidentale adornamento discompagnata; sì come sarà questo comento, nel quale si vedrà l'agevolezza delle sue sillabe, la proprietà delle sue condizioni, e le soavi orazioni che di lui si fanno; le quali chi bene agguarderà, vedrà essere piene di dolcissima ed amabilissima bellezza.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Convivio* i. 7. The translations from Greek prose which Dante knew were the works of Aristotle, the *Timæus* of Plato, and some of the writings of Dionysius and John of Damascus.

<sup>2</sup> *Convivio* i. 10.





PLATE III.—INFERNO, Canto II.

(*Sandro Botticelli*)

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Dante, the poet of the continuity of the Latin civilisation, the prophet of Italy's re-vindication of her rightful place among the nations who owe to her their share in that civilisation, was the first romance philologist. The *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is the first treatise ever written on romance philology, the Italian language, and the art of Italian poetry. Croce has observed: "Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* has great importance as a concomitant symptom of the new romance literature which is becoming aware of its own power, rather than for the æsthetic ideas that it contains or for the quality of its critical judgments." But we must remember that Dante is labouring as a pioneer in a totally unexplored field; he has naturally none of the advantages of modern philologists and students of language, but only his own intuition and observation to guide him. The fact that his critical judgments are occasionally at fault, his conclusions sometimes erroneous, is less surprising than his originality and insight. This, perhaps, applies particularly to the wonderful first book, in some respects (as, for instance, in his treatment of the Italian dialects) the most modern in spirit of all that Dante has left us. It is true that the conclusion, to which this examination and classification of the dialects lead him, is an erroneous one; for he rejects Tuscan, among the rest, in favour of the *vulgare illustre*, as a form, Mazzini finely said, worthy of representing the national idea; an ideal literary Italian, an abstraction free from local characteristics. In this he was influenced mainly by two

Dante  
1st  
Romance  
philology



considerations : the analogy between such a conventional language and the mediæval conception of classical Latin as *grammatica* ; and the fact that he finds, or seems to find, this abstraction realised in the lyrical poetry of certain of his predecessors—Sicilians, Apulians, Bolognese, Tuscans—who, though natives of different regions of Italy, appeared to be using a common literary language. As D'Ovidio well remarks : “The true and great unity of the language, of the language sufficient for every kind of poetry and of prose, was certainly still in the future. But a small and circumscribed unity, the unity of the lyrical language, was already formed. The one was to be in great part the child of the *Divina Commedia* ; the other had already inspired the mistakes of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.”<sup>1</sup>

But these matters less directly touch our present subject. I will here confine myself to the poetic theory of the second book.

Having evolved his doctrine of “the illustrious Italian vernacular,” Dante declares that it is equally fit for use in prose and in verse. But, since not every kind of poetry requires this *vulgare illustre*, it would seem to follow that there can be prose statelier than certain forms of poetry (the prose of which he was at the same time giving a practical example in the *Convivio*). Only certain subjects are worthy to be thus treated in poetry. In the *Vita Nuova*, he had censured “coloro che rimano sopra altra materia che

<sup>1</sup> *Versificazione italiana e arte poetica medioevale*, p. 525.

amorosa, con ciò sia cosa che cotale modo di parlare fosse dal principio trovato per dire d'amore."<sup>1</sup> Now he admits a wider range of subjects as worthy to be sung in the highest vernacular, and characteristically links his theory with a philosophical conception of human life. "As man has a threefold vital activity (*tripliciter spirituat*), to wit, the vegetable, the animal, and the rational, he journeys on a threefold way."<sup>2</sup> It is the old scholastic doctrine, derived from Aristotle, of the soul having three principles or modes of energy—what Dante in the *Convivio* calls *potenze*: *potenza vegetativa* (which Aquinas terms "nutritive"), concerned with the maintenance of the bodily organism; *potenza sensitiva*; *potenza intellettiva*, or rational power.<sup>3</sup> We live by the first, perceive and feel by the second, know and understand by the third. They may be called "Life," "Sense" or "Sensation," "Reason" or "Understanding." In man, these three powers or functions are dependent upon each other, and are included in the rational soul, which is the one actuating principle. Dante says that, according to the vegetative power, man seeks what is useful; according to the animal, what is pleasurable; "secundum quod rationale, honestum quærit, in quo solus est, vel angelicæ naturæ sociatur";<sup>4</sup> "according as he is rational, he seeks what is *spiritually beautiful*, in which he is alone, or shares in the angelic nature." Both Augustine and Aquinas attach the

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Nuova* xxv.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Convivio* iii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2.

meaning of "spiritually beautiful" to the word *honestum*; Aquinas adopting a sentence of Augustine, to the effect that by *honestum* he understands "intelligible beauty which we properly call spiritual."<sup>1</sup> We remember that the epithet *onesta* is applied to Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*: "Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare"; and there is a passage in the *Convivio* where *beltate dell' anima* is used as practically equivalent to the present *quod est honestum*.<sup>2</sup> In each of these spheres, what is greatest is worthy of supreme artistic treatment:—

"First, in respect of what is useful; in which, if we carefully consider the purpose of all who seek utility, we shall find it nought else except *safety*. Secondly, in respect of what is pleasurable; in which we say that to be most greatly pleasurable which delights by the most precious object of the appetite; and this is *Love*. Thirdly, in respect of what is spiritually beautiful; in which no one doubts that it is *Virtue*. Therefore these three, to wit, *Safety*, *Love* and *Virtue*, appear to be those highest matters which are to be treated most greatly, or rather, the things which are chief with respect to them—as *valour in arms*, the *fire of love*, and the *direction of the will*."<sup>3</sup>

The widening of Dante's conception of the legitimate subject of vernacular poetry, since the days of the *Vita Nuova*, was probably in part due to his study

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 145, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Convivio* iii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2.





PLATE IV.—INFERNO, Canto IX.

(*Sandro Botticelli*)

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Troubadours

of the troubadours. Taking his examples from both Provence and Italy, he cites Bertran de Born as having written on arms, Arnaut Daniel and Cino da Pistoia on love, Giraut de Borneil and himself ("the friend of Cino") on *rectitudo*.

Turning now to consider what is the most excellent form in which these subjects can be treated, Dante finds it to be the canzone. A subject fit to be sung in the highest or "tragic" style must be dealt with in a canzone: the stateliness of the lines, the loftiness of the construction, and the excellence of the words harmonising with the weightiness of the matter.<sup>1</sup> Thus a canzone is a *tragica conjugatio*, a joining together in the tragic style of equal stanzas without a refrain and referring to one subject (*ad unam sententiam*). The words "without a refrain" (*sine responsorio*) are inserted to distinguish the canzone proper from the ballata or *canzone a ballo*, which had a special *ripresa* sung at the beginning and repeated after each stanza. What Dante calls the *tragica conjugatio* is most nearly realised in English poetry by the ode, while the closest counterpart to the canzone—though with the number of lines varying in the stanza—is offered by Spenser's *Epithalamion*.<sup>2</sup> In the rules that Dante lays down for the construction of the canzone in every detail, we may notice his

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 8. This, of course, refers only to the type of canzone with stanzas divisible into metrical periods; the other type, the *sestina*, is familiar to English poetry from the Elizabethans to our own day.



predilection for a stanza ending with a rhyming couplet: "Pulcerrime tamen se habent ultimorum carminum desinentiæ, si cum rithimo in silentium cadant."<sup>1</sup>

Professor Saintsbury has noted the remarkable contrast between the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. The principal object proposed in the *Lyrical Ballads* was "to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men"; "humble and rustic life was generally chosen"; the language of men in such life was adopted, with avoidance of "poetic diction." Further, Wordsworth lays down as a general rule that "the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose." Dante, on the other hand, declares that the illustrious language is not suited "to dwellers in the mountains dealing with rustic concerns,"<sup>2</sup> and conceives of his three noblest subjects, dealt with in the highest style, with deliberate choice of the noblest construction and of the noblest words, excluding childish words because of their simplicity, and sylvan words because of their roughness: "Consider, reader, how much it behoves thee to use the sieve in selecting noble words; for if thou hast regard to the illustrious vulgar tongue, which poets ought to use when writing in the tragic style in the

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 1.

vernacular, thou wilt take care that the noblest words alone are left in thy sieve.”<sup>1</sup> But the opposition between Dante and Wordsworth is not so complete as might thus appear. Dante is here considering one particular form of poetry, the “one supreme poem in the vulgar tongue which we call canzone by super-excellence”;<sup>2</sup> and Wordsworth himself gives us something directly analogous with the *tragica conjugatio* in such pieces as *Intimations of Immortality*, the *Ode to Duty*, the *Ode* “Who rises on the banks of Seine.”

For Dante, as for his contemporaries, lyrical poetry was poetry written for a musical setting. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, he defines poetry as *factio rethorica musice composita*, “a rhetorical fiction [or, perhaps, “fashioning”] musically composed”—and he tells us, in the *Convivio*, that poets are “those who have bound their words with the art of music”: “i poeti che coll’ arte musaica le loro parole hanno legate.”<sup>3</sup> To complete this definition of poetry, we need the famous conversation between Dante and Bonagiunta of Lucca in the *Purgatorio* :—

Ma di’ s’io veggio qui colui che fuore  
Trasse le nuove rime, cominciando :  
Donne, ch’avete intelletto d’amore.  
Ed io a lui : Io mi son un che, quando  
Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo  
Che ditta dentro, vo significando.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 8. In these three quotations I avail myself of Mr. A. G. F. Howell’s translation.

<sup>3</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 4; *Convivio* iv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Purgatorio* xxiv. 49-54.

Here poetry is treated as depending upon direct inspiration and artistic correspondence with it. We see that Dante admits two elements in his definition : the one referring to inspiration and spiritual content (" Io mi son un che, quando Amor mi spira, noto "); the other to technique and external form (" ed a quel modo che ditta dentro, vo significando.") The first part clearly corresponds with what, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, he calls *sententia*.

Again, still in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante curiously contrasts the poets who write verse in the vernacular with the Latin poets, the " regular " or " great " poets : " They differ from the great poets, that is, the regular poets, for the latter were great in language and regular in art when they wrote poetry, whereas the former compose casually. It therefore happens that, the more closely we imitate those, the more correctly we write poetry." <sup>1</sup> He apparently means that the Italian poets had hitherto composed without the perfectly formed language and clearly defined metrical rules of the Latin poets, whom he holds up for imitation in these respects.

This sentence surely illustrates Dante's own words to Virgil in the *Divina Commedia* :—

O degli altri poeti onore e lume,  
 Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore,  
 Che m'han fatto cercar lo tuo volume.  
 Tu se' lo mio maestro e il mio autore :  
 Tu se' solo colui da cui io tolsi  
 Lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Inferno* i. 82-87.



It has also a direct bearing upon the lines associating Guido Cavalcanti with himself, in the tenth canto of the *Inferno*; a passage of searching literary criticism, presented in allegorical fashion:—

Piangendo disse : Se per questo cieco  
Carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,  
Mio figlio ov'è ? e perchè non è teco ?  
Ed io a lui : Da me stesso non vegno :  
Colui, ch'attende là, per qui mi mena,  
Forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno.<sup>1</sup>

*Inferno*  
*Guido*  
*Cavalcanti*

These lines answer the question why Guido Cavalcanti, with all his talent, could not, like Dante, compose a *Divina Commedia*, and thus follow Virgil through the other world. In the eyes of men like Guido's father the two had begun alike. They had appeared as the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*, and had practised lyrical poetry together; but, whereas Guido had studied exclusively his Provençal and Italian predecessors, neglecting the classical poets, and more particularly the *Æneid*, Dante could appeal in addition to *il lungo studio e il grande amore* which had made him search through Virgil's volume, had given him a higher flight, the *bello stile*, and the starting-point for his own poem.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the two poets whom Dante regarded as the greatest among the Italians of the thirteenth century were Guido Guinicelli and Guido Cavalcanti—though he speaks, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, of his younger contemporary, Cino da Pistoia, in a way

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno* x. 58–63.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. D'Ovidio, *Studi sulla Divina Commedia*, pp. 162–168.

that implies that the last named was at least their equal. The two Guidos, Guido of Florence and Guido of Bologna, are coupled in the well-known lines placed upon the lips of Oderisi of Gubbio in the *Purgatorio* :—

Così ha tolto l'uno all' altro Guido  
La gloria della lingua, e forse è nato  
Chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido.<sup>1</sup>

I think that the full meaning of the episode is not realised by understanding this as either a mere general prophecy of a greater poet to come or a specific reference to Dante himself. The tone of the whole passage, taken in connexion with what follows, seems to imply that Oderisi is supposed to be making a vague general statement, but that Dante—for a moment—does apply it to himself; for, when presently the former goes on to speak of the transient character of such renown, the poet answers :—

Tuo vero dir m'incora  
Buona umiltà, e gran tumor m'appiani.<sup>2</sup>

And he is still in this humbled frame of mind when, in the seventh terrace, he looks upon Guido Guinicelli :—

Quand'ï' odo nomar se stesso, il padre  
Mio e degli altri miei miglior, che mai  
Rime d'amore usar dolci e leggiadre.<sup>3</sup>

He is speaking here of love-poetry only, of lyrical love-poetry in which *la gloria della lingua* had originally been won. There is possibly an allusion to Cino da

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio* xi. 97-99.    <sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 118-119.    <sup>3</sup> *ibid.* xxvi. 97-99.

Pistoia, who is nowhere mentioned in the *Divina Commedia*, but whom Dante had exalted in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* as the representative poet of love, and thus, perhaps, by implication, superior in this respect to himself. It is a little tempting to associate with this the way Guido Guinicelli is made to place Arnaut Daniel above Giraut de Borneil in the same canto, for, in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante had coupled Arnaut Daniel with Cino, Giraut de Borneil with himself :—

O frate, disse, questi ch'io ti cerno  
 Col dito (ed additò uno spirto innanzi),  
 Fu miglior fabbro del parlar materno.  
 Versi d'amore e prose di romanzi  
 Soverchiò tutti; e lascia dir gli stolti,  
 Che quel di Lemosì credon ch'avanzi.  
 A voce più ch'al ver drizzan li volti;  
 E così ferman sua opinione,  
 Prima ch'arte o ragion per lor s'ascolti.  
 Così fer molti antichi di Guittone,  
 Di grido in grido pur lui dando pregio,  
 Fin che l'ha vinto il ver con più persone.<sup>1</sup>

For the rest, Dante's exaltation of Arnaut Daniel and his constant depreciation of Guittone d'Arezzo are his two critical judgments the least easy of acceptance for the modern reader. In the case of Arnaut Daniel, the metrical skill and originality of that "miglior fabbro del parlar materno," which so profoundly influenced Dante himself at the stage of the *rime pietrose*, had clearly won for him this high place in the estimation of his Italian successor. Even Guido

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio* xxvi. 115-126. Cf. *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2.



Guinicelli had been no innovator in matters of technique; his gift to Dante, and to Italian poetry in general, had been in the sphere of the spirit. As for Fra Guittone, "qui nunquam se ad curiale vulgare direxit," his "municipalia dicta" would seem to have obscured in Dante's eyes the "gravitas sententiarum" which we must surely recognise in much of his verse. On the other hand, it is noticeable that the polished language, the use of "vocabula curialiora" in his lyrics which Dante perceives in Giacomo da Lentino (together with Rinaldo d'Aquino, whom elsewhere he seems to rank higher), does not save the Notary from inclusion by Bonagiunta among those whom the *nodo* (of conventionality or imitation) held back from the *dolce stil nuovo* :—

O frate, issa vegg'io, diss' elli, il nodo,  
 Che il Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne  
 Di qua dal dolce stil novo ch'ì' odo.  
 Io veggio ben come le vostre penne  
 Diretro al dittator sen vanno strette,  
 Che delle nostre certo non avvenne.  
 E qual più a riguardar oltre si mette,  
 Non vede più dall' uno all' altro stile.<sup>1</sup>

"Versi d'amore e prose di romanzi." This line brings us back to that singularly interesting passage in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* where Dante, examining the rival claims for pre-eminence of the three neo-Latin languages, cites the vernacular prose of France, the alleged chronological primacy of the poetry of Provence. Here, for *romanzi* (the only place where

<sup>1</sup> *Purgatorio* xxiv. 55–62. Cf. *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 10, ii. 13. i. 13, ii. 6, i. 12.

Dante uses the word "romance"), we have the Latin *ambages*: "Arturi regis ambages pulcerrimæ."<sup>1</sup> It is evident, I think, that Dante was from the beginning more attracted and impressed by the Arthurian legends than by the matter of the Carolingian cycle. From the Carolingian story we have indeed one *terzina*, full of romantic feeling, where the horn of Nimrod thunders through the lowest circle of Hell:—

Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando  
Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta,  
Non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.<sup>2</sup>

But a bare indication suffices for Ganellon. Charlemagne and Roland, William and Rainouart, flash through the ruddy cross of the sphere of Mars; Dante's gaze follows their flight, "com'occhio segue suo falcon volando"; but that is all. The Arthurian glamour, on the other hand, touched the poet's spirit to finer issues. The magic boat which Merlin gave to the Lady of Shalott supplies the imagery of his early sonnet to Guido Cavalcanti (*Guido, vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io*); "il cavaliere Lancilotto" is surely felt as more than a mere name in one of the most striking passages of the *Convivio*; the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, with "le donne antiche e i cavalieri," has the true Arthurian intonation; out of the romances of

<sup>1</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* i. 10. On the word *ambages*, cf. Rajna, in the first volume of Barbi's new series of *Studi Danteschi*.

<sup>2</sup> *Inferno* xxxi. 16–18. Since writing this, I find the following appreciation of these lines in Croce, *La poesia di Dante*, p. 93: "La *terzina* in cui par che si raddensi e si componga nella sua maggior linea l'epica delle *chansons de geste*."

Lancelot and Tristram alike came the ineffable episode of Paolo and Francesca.

There can, I think, be little doubt that Dante intended to dedicate the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* to Cino da Pistoia, as he had previously dedicated the *Vita Nuova* to Guido Cavalcanti. We remember how Cino himself, in a sonnet after his friend's death, describes the *Divina Commedia* as the book "che mostra Dante signor d'ogni rima." What, then, is its relation to the poetic theories of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*?

We read in the Letter to Can Grande: "There are six things which must be inquired into at the beginning of any work of instruction: to wit, the *subject, agent, form, and end*, the *title of the work*, and the *branch of philosophy* it concerns."<sup>1</sup> This illustrates the spirit in which the mediæval critic approached a great literary work. It is not peculiar to Dante. A slightly older contemporary, Albertino Mussato of Padua, about 1314, wrote a Latin tragedy, the *Ecerinis*, on the subject of the tyranny of Ezzelino and Alberico da Romano, and we possess the commentary composed upon it in 1317 (a year or two before the Letter to Can Grande) by a Bolognese grammarian, Guizzardo. This commentary begins with precisely the same indication of treatment as the Letter to Can Grande: "In the beginning of this book, which is the *Ecerinis*, as is the fashion of commentators, the six usual things must be said: to wit, the *efficient cause*, the *final*

<sup>1</sup> *Epistola* x. 6 (Dr. Wicksteed's translation).



*cause*, the *formal cause*, the *material cause*, under what *part of philosophy* it falls, and what is the *title of the book*." The *efficient cause* is the author (or, as Dante puts it, the *agent*), the *final cause* is what Dante calls the *end*, the *formal cause* is the *form* of the poem, the *material cause* is the *subject*. But the method and phraseology are similar. Just as the *end* of the *Divina Commedia* is "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and to lead them to the state of felicity," so the *final cause* of the *Ecerinis* is "to instruct those present or to come to preserve free governments and to shun tyrannies."<sup>1</sup>

Under the *title of the work*, Dante still retains more or less the theory of style that he had maintained in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*: tragedy being an exalted and sublime mode of speech, comedy lax and humble; and, therefore, the *Divina Commedia* falls under the latter head. Also, we know from the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* that he intended, in its unwritten fourth book, to treat the discernment to be exercised with a subject fit to be sung in the comic style, in which sometimes the middle and sometimes the lowly vernacular should be used, and also, dealing with poems in the middle vulgar tongue, to treat specially of rhyme.<sup>2</sup> In the Letter to Can Grande, speaking of the *form*, Dante does not touch the metre of the *Divina Commedia*; but there is extant what is practically a contemporary criticism of the subject.

<sup>1</sup> Albertino Mussato, *Ecerinide*, ed. L. Padrin, pp. 78-83.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 4, ii. 13.

Antonio da Tempo, a Paduan judge, in 1332 dedicated to Alberto della Scala (the nephew of Can Grande) a treatise on Italian poetry, *Summa artis rithimici* or *De Rithimis vulgaribus*. It is written in Latin, but with examples of Italian verse composed by the author himself. Antonio da Tempo had read the *Divina Commedia*, but knew nothing of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, and thought that he was the first writer on "vernacular rhythms"; his work had a wide circulation, whereas the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* fell out of sight until the Cinquecento. The book is an important supplement to the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, because, although Antonio da Tempo deals scantily and superficially with the canzone, he treats certain minor kinds of vernacular rhythms very fully—the sonnet (of which he distinguishes sixteen varieties), the ballata, the serventese, the madrigal, and others. When he comes to the serventese (a species of popular poetry, what we should now call occasional verse, originally used more particularly for satirical and political purposes as distinguished from the stately canzone of love), he says that it is probably called "serventese" because it serves all men, including those who have not a more subtle intellect. It is thus a deviation from its normal character when the serventese depicts history or is subtly fashioned from histories or ancient deeds, "as was the method of Master Dante Alighieri. For although in its arrangement of rhymes that manner of Dante had, as it were, the form of a serventese, it nevertheless was not a serventese, but

could rather be called tragedy, albeit he himself called his book a comedy.”<sup>1</sup>

Modern scholarship has confirmed the Paduan judge, and regards the *terza rima* of the *Divina Commedia* as the development of a particular form of serventese—though so entirely transfigured that its humble origin is concealed. No doubt the serventese was one of the kinds of poetry to be dealt with in the fourth book of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. But, whatever its metrical origin, it is difficult to believe that Dante would have thus consigned to a humble corner of his treatise

Il poema sacro  
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra.

Rather must we suppose that, as he advanced with the *Divina Commedia*, Dante's views on vernacular poetry had undergone modification. As far as we know, he wrote no canzoni in later life; the *tragica conjugatio* was no longer his ideal of poetry. All kinds of speech find their place in the poem, which is at times epical in intonation, at others moving with the freedom of familiar conversation, at others rising on exquisite flights of lyrical interbreathing. “*Armorum pro-bitas*,” “*amoris accensio*,” “*directio voluntatis*,” all receive due utterance, and the *Divina Commedia* prepared the way for that unity of Italian literature in the illustrious vernacular that Dante had already sought, not quite successfully, in the *De Vulgari*

<sup>1</sup> *Delle rime volgari trattato di Antonio da Tempo*, ed. G. Grion, p. 147.



*Eloquentia*, as a worthy medium for the expression of the national idea.

It is obvious that characterisation, when based upon literary sources, may be essentially an exercise of literary criticism. There is a chapter in the *De Monarchia*, reconstructing the character of St. Peter—with his “*puritas et simplicitas naturalis*”—out of the Gospels,<sup>1</sup> which anticipates such creation of character in the *Divina Commedia*. The presentation of Virgil himself is an example. Discarding the medieval legends of Virgil the magician, Dante gave the world a figure of his master and predecessor, “*l’altissimo poeta*,” derived—at least in its main features—from the long and loving study of the *Æneid* and the fourth Eclogue. The delineation of Cato—when the allegorising tendencies of the *Convivio* have been left behind—is surely a critical appreciation of the noblest aspect of the *Pharsalia*. The somewhat enigmatical figure of Sordello, and the part he plays in the *Purgatorio*, is nothing but an imaginative reconstruction of the troubadour’s personality from his own great poem on the death of Blacatz. It would not be hard to show that the function and character of certain of the blessed in the *Paradiso*—notably Thomas Aquinas, Peter Damian, and St. Bernard—are so based upon their own writings as to furnish an interpretation and illumined criticism. We turn from the *Paradiso* to their works upon our shelves as to the books of a personal friend of our own.

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarchia* iii. 9.

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THE ITALY OF DANTE AND THE ITALY  
OF VIRGIL

J. W. MACKAIL.

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## THE ITALY OF DANTE AND THE ITALY OF VIRGIL

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IT is matter of common consent that Dante is, not only the greatest of the poets produced by Italy since the age of Virgil, but also a national Italian poet in the fullest and most vital sense. From the beginnings of the Risorgimento until now, he has been accepted and proclaimed as the poet and prophet of Italy. Writers and thinkers of all types, ranging from Leopardi to Mazzini, were at one in so regarding him. To this view, when once it had been firmly established and had spread through the common consciousness of the civilised world, is very largely due the extraordinary growth, both in extent and in depth, of the study of Dante during the last thirty or forty years. There were many contributory reasons for it: the general widening of the intellectual horizon; the development of the historical method as a new calculus for searching and interpreting the past; the revival of interest in the medieval Empire and in the institutions or ideals of the Middle Ages; and, it may be added, a better appreciation both of poetry as an art and of art as not merely an expression, but a function of life. But among all these and other reasons stands prominent this: that Dante was one, and one of the most impor-

tant, of the intellectual and spiritual forces which went to create Italian unity and nationality, and to show the path for the mission of Italy as well as for her effective existence.

The purpose of the present paper is not to analyse this claim. It is rather to attempt some closer definition of it, and to mention some lines of thought which it suggests. To weigh it more fully would be a task at once intricate and immense. It will be sufficient for the moment to indicate, without pursuing them into detail, some of these lines of thought and their interconnexion, and, more particularly, to observe, as has perhaps not hitherto been clearly enough done, the analogies in this respect between Dante and Dante's master. The more we study these, the more fertile they will appear in suggestion, the more potent in illumination, not as regards the two poets and their work only; for they bear directly on the question, no mere abstract one, how far Italian nationality and Italian unity are a new creation, and how far the recapture of an ancient ideal, or even the renewal of an ancient achievement.

Questions which at once occur in our reading of Dante are, among others, these. First, what precise meaning is to be attached to the term Italy as he uses it? Secondly, in what sense was Dante, or in what sense did he feel himself to be, an Italian, as distinct from a Florentine on the one hand and an Imperialist on the other? Thirdly, what influence was exercised on him by his conception of Italy,

and what influence did he in turn exercise on that conception in other minds, in his own time and afterwards?

All these questions may be asked about Virgil likewise; and in exactly the same terms, if "Mantuan" be substituted for "Florentine." With regard to all three, the parallel between Dante and Virgil is striking and highly significant, quite apart from the further and equally interesting study of the direct influence of Virgil on Dante in the whole matter. In so large a subject, all that can be done here is to sketch its outlines and indicate some of the primary conclusions to be drawn from the inquiry. Further study would lead on to the still larger question of the relation of poetry to history. That has two sides. It involves the extent to which political and civic institutions or ideals mould poetry, and the extent to which, conversely, the poets mould them. And yet more; it leads on to a still higher claim—perhaps the highest—which can be made for poetry; namely, that poetry is the ultimate expression of history, as of philosophy.

Geographically, Italy is one of the most striking instances of a country with definite natural boundaries. It is, in the classic phrase of Petrarch,

il bel paese  
Ch' Appennin parte e 'l mar circonda e l' Alpe.

It lies, with but one gap, within a ring-fence of sea and mountain-wall. That gap is the open gateway on the north-eastern frontier, through which from



time immemorial the peninsula has again and again been invaded and re-populated, and in whose fortunes lies the main key to Italian history. On its importance, both in Virgil's time and in Dante's, as long before Virgil and down to the present day, something more will have to be said. Otherwise the Italian peninsula is to the geographer a single country, clean-cut and well defined. Sicily and Sardinia are separate countries, connected with or disconnected from it politically by changes of events. The Alpine frontier on north and north-west has varied from time to time, but the precise line followed by it at one time or another has been chiefly a matter of the occupation of strategic points; otherwise the changes in it have been neither extensive nor important.

But seldom, if indeed ever, has this single geographical entity been fully either a single nation or a single state until the unification of the nineteenth century; and that unification, though now politically secured, is still nationally far from complete. Italy, throughout history, has been the seat of kingdoms, republics, principalities, confederacies, which were all local and partial, and generally in acute conflict, racial and cultural, as well as political, among one another. And when it approached unity most nearly, it was not as a self-developed and independent state, but as a portion or province of a larger empire.

At the dawn of systematically recorded history—behind which it is needless to go for the present purpose—Italy was occupied by four main groups

among many others of smaller importance. These were :—

(1) The Celtic tribes of the north and north-west. They never coalesced into either a state or a nation.

(2) The Etruscan League, a powerful and well-organised confederacy, stretching slantwise across the peninsula from the north-eastern frontier down to the mouth of the Tiber, and at its greatest extension some way further. Its dominions covered the whole of the territory, and rather more, which was under the rule of the great Countess Matilda in the twelfth century.

(3) The Central-Italian populations. They were all seemingly of kindred blood, but were divided by language and tradition into the three groups of Oscans, Sabellians, and Umbro-Latins. It was among them that municipal organisation and conscious citizenship began. They had some sense of kinship, though not enough to keep them from perpetual warfare among one another; and they had a tendency to combine into leagues of smaller groups. The most important among these was the Latin league, within or rather on the edge of which grew up the unique city-state of Rome. But Rome was a city, not a nation. For the Latins themselves, no less than for the successive circles of tribes or peoples beyond them, Rome was the stone cut out without hands which smote them to pieces, and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

(4) The Greek colonies in the south. The string

of Greek towns with their territories was so nearly continuous all round the coast from Cumae to Bari that it received a common name, *Magna Graecia*, the Greater Greece beyond the seas. The native population along this strip of coast was more or less Hellenised ; but Greek control nowhere reached far inland, and Greek influence not much further.

Among all these populations there was no trace and no sense of unity. The name of Italy (itself of uncertain origin) was for long used loosely and with a fluctuating sense. Records of the growth both of the name and of the thing it meant are almost wholly Roman. Beyond the Greek colonies on the southern coasts, the peninsula lay outside of the Greek world and of any special Greek interest. We do not know when the Romans began to use the word *Italia*, or what extent of country the name covered in its earliest use. At the time of the Pyrrhic wars it appears to have applied, though still very loosely, to the whole peninsula exclusive of Cisalpine Gaul and Liguria ; it covered, that is to say, pretty nearly the "leg" of Italy, south of the transverse section of the Apennine range. Its first definite extension to the full geographical sense, the country "which the sea and the Alps surround," is found in Polybius. At the time of the Second Punic War, "the Romans," he says, "had subdued all Italy except the land of the Gauls"; and Hannibal, when he crossed the Alps, descended the valley of the Dora "into Italy." For a hundred and fifty years more, usage continued to fluctuate, often



perplexingly, between the larger and the more restricted meaning.

But in whichever sense the term "Italy" were taken, Rome did not either then, or for long afterwards, identify herself with Italy, or seek to merge the Roman in an Italian state. The Roman primacy was that of a conqueror. Italy remained a complex aggregation of tribes, communities and municipalities, under Roman control, with a status ranging from that of full allies to that of mere subjects. It was dotted over at strategic points with Roman colonies sharing the full citizenship. The defeat of Pyrrhus, as stated by historians, "put an end to the last war which the Italians had waged for their independence";<sup>1</sup> but the independence sought was in no sense the independence of a united Italy, of a nation or a commonwealth.

As Roman control became more oppressive, and her Italian allies were treated more as subjects, a common desire to shake off this yoke led to a feeling towards joint Italian nationality. Concurrently, a movement arose at Rome for the incorporation of Italy in the Roman republic. Legislation in this sense was repeatedly brought forward. The question remained a burning one for a full generation. The assassination of Livius Drusus, in 91 B.C., before he had brought in his proposed law extending Roman citizenship to all the allies, was followed at once by

<sup>1</sup> The words are those of Mommsen, *Roman History*, Book IV. ch. vii.

that general Italian revolt known as the Social War. An Italian Government, the first in history, was set up. Samnite and Latin were adopted as the joint official languages of the new state. Italian coinage was issued; and the town of Italica (afterwards known as Corfinium) was founded in the centre of the peninsula as the new capital. It was the first of the disastrous attempts made in the course of history to create a unified Italy from which Rome was excluded.

Rome conquered in the field; but as the result of the war Roman citizenship was, two years later, extended over Italy including Cispadane Gaul. The status of the north, however, remained anomalous and confused. In the eye of the law all the territory beyond the Rubico was still a province. The admission of the Transpadanes to citizenship was proposed in 65 B.C., but not effected until 49 B.C. Cisalpina only ceased to be technically a province in 42 B.C., the year of Philippi. A unified Italy then at last existed; and the Latin language, though still subject to local variations of dialect, soon became the common speech of the whole peninsula.

Virgil was born in 70 B.C., midway in the process of fusion. He combined in himself, in a very singular and significant way, all the strains which have been noted as the main elements in the complex fabric of an earlier period. He was a native of the Cisalpina. Mantua had been an important Etruscan city, and there is much reason to believe that Virgil himself was, on one side at least, of Etruscan blood. On more

doubtful evidence, drawn partly from his name and partly from the temper and romantic quality of his genius, he has been claimed, and very widely accepted, as Celtic by parentage. He was either born, or became very early in life, a Roman citizen. In his youth he absorbed Greek culture, and in later years lived at Tarentum, and finally settled at Naples, both originally Greek towns of the south.

The dominant ideal in his poetry, the keynote both of the *Georgics* and, more definitely, of the *Æneid*, is the reconciliation and coalescence of Rome and Italy. In the *Georgics* he is perhaps more an Italian than a Roman. The *laudes Italiæ*, the matchless panegyric at the end of the Second Book, became a sort of subtitle for the whole poem. Yet it is interesting to note that the word *Romanus* occurs in the *Georgics* much oftener than *Italus*. In the *Æneid* their frequency is almost the same. Of set purpose, they are used as far as may be interchangeably. The synthesis, as a doctrine, a faith, and a prophecy, has become complete. It is the running motive of the *Æneid* throughout, emphasised over and over again in a hundred passages. The most striking in their setting are two at the beginning and end of the poem. In the prologue Virgil gives his whole argument in the seven majestic lines which begin on the word *Italiam* and end on the word *Romæ*. At the conclusion he concentrates it into a single line in the scene of the reconciliation of the Gods, at once a prayer, a decree, and a benediction: *Sit Romana potens Itala virtute*



*propago*. And midway between these he crystallises it into two words, *Romula tellus*, almost the last which come (vi. 876) from the glorified spirit of Anchises. It was this, even more than his quality as an artist, which secured for Virgil his unique place among the poets of the whole world through age after age. He may be called, in a very real sense, the creator for all time of Italian Rome and Roman Italy.

The unified Italy of Augustus and Virgil had reached its definite natural boundaries except at the open gates of the north-eastern frontier. From the prologue to the third *Georgic* may be inferred, in the difficult years between 36 and 31 B.C., a contemplated retirement and consolidation of that frontier upon, or but little in advance of, the short and easily defensible line of the Mincio. Something similar had to be contemplated, as possibly inevitable, by the Italian Chief Command in the autumn of 1917, after the disaster of Caporetto. But the situation was changed some years later by the successful offensive campaigns of Tiberius and Drusus. The frontier, instead of being drawn back, was pushed well forward into the Tyrol and Istria, up beyond Trent on the left, down beyond Trieste on the right. The Region of Venetia, numbered X in the Augustan organisation, included pretty nearly the whole of what until recently was known as Italia Irredenta. On west and south the Adige was the boundary between it and Region XI, Gallia Transpadana. Its northern limit was advanced from the foothills of the Venetian Alps

up to the watershed of the mountain chain, running roughly east and west, on the southern slopes of which are the sources of the Bacchiglione, Piave, and Tagliamento. From the further end of that line, in the mountains above the sources of the Isonzo, the frontier turned at a right angle and ran almost due south. It followed, at least approximately, the watershed between the basins of the Isonzo and the upper Save; it crossed the plateau of the Carso near its southeastern end; and it apparently reached the sea at the mouth of the little river Arsa, on the further side of the Istrian peninsula, just outside the mouth of the Quernero channel. It thus followed almost exactly the line traced by the Treaty of London in 1915. In later years the upper half of this north-to-south line was again thrown forward in a deep salient, comprising the upper valley of the Save and its tributary streams, and extending at its apex a good way east of Laibach. Beyond this frontier were the provinces of Noricum to the north and Pannonia to the south of the Save. The covering legions were quartered far forward in these provinces, along the line of the Drave. Italy was unified and complete; and except for trifling modifications, the Augustan limits remained good for more than three hundred years.

But that unified Italy, impressive and majestic as it was, could hardly be called either a state or a nationality. It was the central core of the Roman Empire, which itself was the state, and in which distinctions of nationality tended to become obliterated.

*Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam*, says the last classical panegyrist of the Imperial achievement. Italy continued to have an administrative and a fiscal system differing from those of the provinces, but the distinction grew less and less. Its practical disappearance is registered, as an accepted fact which had to be regularised, by the historic Edict of Caracalla in 212 A.D. The Latin language and culture had before then spread over the entire West. Gaul, Spain, Africa ranked side by side with Italy; and while Rome was still the *caput orbis*, the centre of the system and the seat of the central government, Italy was otherwise little more than one of the provinces.

Under Constantine's reorganisation of the Empire Italy becomes once more, as it was to be again in later ages, a geographical expression. Unity is lost. For other purposes than those of the geographer, the word Italy is used in three wholly different senses. The Prefecture of Italy included, besides the Italian peninsula, Rhætia (*i.e.* Switzerland, and Bavaria up to the line of the Danube), Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia, and the portion of Northern Africa now covered by Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripolitana. The Diocese of Italy was the Italian peninsula; but it was little more than an administrative coupling-up of two Vicariates, corresponding in substance to the old Italy of the later Republic and to Cisalpine Gaul; and now it is the latter, not the former, that bears the specific name of Italy. North and South have fallen asunder again; and the capital is no longer Rome, but Milan.



The visit of Constantius to Rome in 357, so vividly described by Ammianus, is a transitory apparition, like that of some Saxon or Swabian Emperor in the Middle Ages. We are passing from the ancient to the medieval and modern world. The Vicariate of Italy comprised the sub-provinces of Æmilia, Flaminia, Liguria, Venetia, Istria, and the Cottian and Rhætian Alps. The remainder of the peninsula, south of it, constituted the Vicariate of Rome. The Virgilian unity of Italy, like the Virgilian ideal of the identification or consubstantiation of Italy with Rome, had failed to accomplish itself.

To trace, even in brief summary, the course of Italian history between the fourth and the thirteenth centuries would be impossible within the limits of this paper. But a few salient points may be noted, as landmarks in the wide tract which lies between the Italy of Virgil and the Italy of Dante.

The deposition of Romulus Augustulus by Odovakar in 476 registers, as it were, the disappearance of the old Virgilian and Augustan world, while it emphasises the complete severance of Italy and Rome. Odovakar took the title, for the first time in history, of King of Italy. But his kingdom was practically the Constantinian Vicariate, and the seat of government was Pavia. At the same time, the Senate and People of Rome formally renounced their traditional world-sovereignty; and while they nominally accepted the position of a diocese of the Byzantine Empire, left the way clear for the growth of the Temporal Power.

The Gothic kingdom founded by Theodoric seventeen years later was larger and more of a reality. With better fortune it might gradually have taken effective possession of the peninsula and developed in it a nascent sense of common Italian nationality. But the fates were adverse; when it was smashed to pieces by the military genius of Narses, Italy fell again into a bundle of fragments, under the general control of the exarchs of Ravenna. A few years later came the Lombard invasion and the foundation of a Lombard kingdom, also with its capital at Pavia, which lasted for two centuries. At its greatest extent it covered the bulk of the peninsula, exclusive of Genoa and Venice in the north, Rome and the Patrimony of Peter in the centre, and the coast towns of the South with their territories. But it was essentially, like its Gothic predecessor, a North-Italian kingdom; the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento being only in loose feudal adherence to it, and the divorce of Rome from Italy which has lasted until modern times having taken full effect.

The resettlement of Italy by Charlemagne is obscure. But under the provisions of the Peace of Verdun in 843, the kingdom of Italy stretched, nominally at least, from the Alps to Terracina. The kings of Italy had little or no control over their feudatories; and later in that century the Eastern Empire re-established itself in the south, with Bari as the Greek capital. The last futile attempt towards the creation of an independent and unitary Italy was made by

Berenger, Marquis of Ivrea, about the middle of the tenth century. But the hour of Piedmont had not yet come. Berenger ceded his kingdom to Otto the Great, who assumed the Iron Crown at Milan the year before he was crowned as Emperor. The kingdom of Italy as a substantive thing then ceased to exist for just nine hundred years.

During the three centuries from this point to the birth of Dante, the most important points to be noted as bearing on the Italian problem are perhaps these:—

(1) The development within the peninsula of five prominent powers which were in some sense states. These were the republics of Milan, Florence, and Venice, the Patrimony of Peter, and the kingdom of Naples.

(2) The re-emergence of the Italian municipal instinct which had been developed and fostered by the policy and genius of Rome. It was accompanied by the growth of civic life and institutions and by the expansion of commerce. With these there gradually arose the consciousness of an Italian race, though not of an Italian nation.

(3) A further separation between north and south brought about by the Norman conquests in lower Italy. These began early in the eleventh century; but the Norman dukes did not assume the title of king until 1130, and then called themselves kings of Sicily. This became later the joint kingdom of Sicily and Apulia.

(4) A series of transitory republics at Rome, which



served to keep alive some memory of the great Roman past.

(5) The irreconcilable hostility between the Papacy and the Empire, from the time of Hildebrand (1073-1085) onwards.

Between these two last great forces the heap of fragments into which Italy had fallen were used as gambling counters. Each of them passed from one side to the other according to the momentary preponderance of Guelfs or Ghibellines. [Any latent sense of nationality was swallowed up by the forces of municipal autonomy, which never re-combined except in shifting and short-lived confederacies.] After the battle of Legnano, in 1176, historians note that the name Italy is not once used in the terms of pacification. But the idea of an independent Italy still lurked in the background. When Charles of Anjou was called in to crush Manfred, he received, in 1265, investiture in the indivisible *regno*—the kingdom of Italy—on condition that it should not be held together with the Empire. But from that so-called indivisible kingdom, Rome, with the Patrimony of St. Peter and the duchy of Benevento, was reserved; and he was to hold the kingdom thus mutilated as a fief of the Church.

In the course of these three centuries, with the growth of inter-civic and foreign commerce, came wealth. With wealth and the extension of relations to other countries and races came culture. Culture could not be confined within municipal or provincial limits. The sense of common nationality grew up

concurrently with the spread of a highly internationalised civilisation. At the court of Frederick II "Italian came into being as a language." Dante wrote in Tuscan; but the Tuscan in which he wrote was also Italian. He created Italian literature; and the immense power of words over human affairs is nowhere shown more remarkably than in the influence exercised on later history by that great achievement.

In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* there is an extremely interesting passage illustrative of the interrelation between a common language and a common organised state. In the Italy of his own time, he says, there are fourteen distinct regional dialects, while the local sub-dialects run to not less than a thousand. The object of his inquiry is the discovery and definition of an established and regulated Italian language, the *vulgare illustre*, as he calls it. One of the notes of such a language is that it should be *curiale*, the accepted language of a court. But here he anticipates an objection; is it not idle—*videtur nugatio*—to speak of a curial Italian, *cum curia careamus*, when there is no such thing as an Italian court? And his answer to this objection is very striking: *licet curia in Italia non sit, membra tamen eius non desunt: curiam habemus, licet corporaliter sit dispersa*: though there is no Italian court, there are the elements of one. These are "corporeally severed"; but in the mass of fragments there is the material for, the potentiality of, the movement towards, an Italian court as the functional organ of an Italian state or nation.

We may now turn to Dante's writings, and attempt to examine in them both how he defines or describes Italy geographically, and also in what terms he speaks of it either as an organised community or as a nation; how it sorts itself in the ascending series (*De Monarchia* i. 3) of *vicinia, civitas, regnum, genus humanum*, or in the collateral organism (*ibid.* 14) of *nationes, regna et civitates*.

Italia, *Europæ regio nobilissima*, as he calls it elsewhere with national pride,<sup>1</sup> extends "*a Ianuensium finibus usque ad promontorium illud qua sinus Adriatici maris incipit et Siciliam*" (*De Vulgari Eloquentia* i. 8). The area so defined is there named as that over which "*sì afirmando loquuntur.*" It is based, that is to say, on the ground of a common language rather than of a common race or citizenship. Thus likewise, in a corresponding passage in the *Inferno* (xxxiii. 79), its inhabitants are referred to as *le genti*, not *la gente*,

Del bel paese là dove il sì suona.

From east to west it extends *tra due liti* (*Paradiso* xxi. 106). *Lo dosso d'Italia* (*Purgatorio* xxx. 86) is the backbone of the Apennines, running right from end to end of it. The *Ianuensium fines* are practically the same as the Augustan boundary between Italy and Gallia Narbonensis, which was fixed at the river Var. From that point its northern frontier is approximately defined in the lines (*Inferno* xx. 61-3),

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarchia* ii. 3.



Suso in Italia bella giace un laco  
 Appiè dell' Alpe, che serra Lamagna  
 Sopra Tiralli, ch' ha nome Benaco ;

it includes, that is, the whole of the Lago di Garda, and marches with "Germany" in the sense in which that term includes Teutonic-speaking Switzerland. Its north-eastern limit is precisely assigned in another passage of the *Inferno* (ix. 113) :—

a Pola presso del Quarnero  
 Che Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna.

The channel of Quarnero divides Istria from the island of Cherso. Outside of it, at the tip of the promontory of the Istrian peninsula, is Pola. Thus Pola is placed definitely in Italy. But if Dante's words are pressed closely, his frontier does not reach up to the head of the Istrian Gulf beyond the Quarnero channel, and *a fortiori* does not include Fiume, which is further on round the corner of the Gulf. North-west of this, and in the debateable land, Dante's Italy includes the sources of the Brenta and Piave (*Paradiso* ix. 27); in other words, it reaches up to the watershed of the Carnic Alps. The much-debated meaning of the *umile Italia* of *Inferno* i. 106, does not affect the question of geographical boundaries.

Virgil had, with a conscious and definite purpose, made the words Roman and Italian as nearly as might be interchangeable and equivalent. Dante uses the words Latin and Italian indiscriminately; they coalesce with him into a single meaning less as a matter of deliberate doctrine than at the prompting

of a mixed poetical and historical instinct. Sordello calls Virgil (*Purgatorio* vii. 16) *gloria de' Latin*. The *terra Latina* of *Inferno* xxviii. 71, *quella dolce terra Latina* in line 26 of the previous canto, is not Latium, but Italy. The Sienese Umberto says (*Purgatorio* xi. 58), *io fui Latino*. When Virgil asks (*Inferno* xxix. 88 foll.)

Dinne s' alcun Latino e tra costoro  
Che son quinc' entro,

Grifolino of Arezzo answers for himself and Capocchio of Siena, *Latin sem noi ambedue*. So also to the question (*Inferno* xxii. 65)

Conosci tu alcun che sia Latino  
Sotto la pece ?

the reply given (*ibid.* l. 97) is

Se voi volete vedere o udire. . . .  
Toschi o Lombardi, io ne farò venire.

The identification is even more pointedly made by the wording of the question (*Purgatorio* xiii. 92), *Ditemi . . . s'anima è qui tra voi che sia Latina*, and the reply given to it,

O frate mio, ciascuna è cittadina  
D' una vera città : ma tu vuoi dire,  
Che vivesse in Italia peregrina.

The supreme expression of the unity and solidarity of Italy in Dante is, of course, the magnificent outburst beginning *Ahi serva Italia* in the sixth canto of the *Purgatorio*, which was a storm-beacon through the

centuries, and became the watchword of the Risorgimento. Next to it in importance come the vision of the Emperor Rudolf in the next canto (vii. 91-6),

imperator che potea  
Sanar le piaghe ch' hanno Italia morta,

but who neglected his task and calling; and that of the Emperor Henry VII (*Paradiso* xxx. 137), who

a drizzare Italia  
Verrà in prima che ella sia disposta.

Striking also is the bitter cry (*Paradiso* xxvii. 57-60) from the lips of St. Peter,

O difesa di Dio, perchè pur giaci?  
Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi  
S'apparecchian di bere: o buon principio,  
A che vil fine convien che tu caschi!

It is not only an expression of the Italian loathing for the French Popes, John XXII and Clement V, but a sombre prophecy of the Age of Invasions, beginning with that of 1494, when once more, as in 1265, *Carlo venne in Italia*.

The apostrophe to Italy in the *De Monarchia* ii. 13, "*O Ausoniam gloriosam si nunquam infirmator ille imperii tui*"—the Emperor Constantine—"natus fuisset!" identifies "Ausonia," the whole of Italy, with Rome or the *Populus Romanus* to which (*ibid.* i. 2) belonged by divine ordinance the monarchy of the world. It is in this sense probably that Dante calls Italy (*Purgatorio* vi. 78) *donna di provincie*; though it must be remembered that the eleven regions into



which Italy itself was divided by Augustus also came to be called provinces (as with modifications they still are) as early as the fourth century. The title *donna di provincie* has in any case imposed itself on the imagination of the world; the "lady of lands," the "*donna e reina*,"<sup>1</sup> has ever since been named and passionately loved as such.

It would be beyond the present scope to trace the faith and doctrine of a unified Italy and a single Italian nation through the times after Dante had given them vital expression. Through the successive periods which fill these six hundred years—the Age of the Despots, the Age of the Invasions, the Age of Spanish-Austrian ascendancy, the revolutionary Napoleonic changes, the reinstated Austrian predominance, the complex movements which resulted in the creation of the kingdom of Italy in 1861, and the extension of the kingdom to its full natural boundaries which has only now been completed—Dante's vision has been a spiritual influence, a constructive force, which has waxed or waned, but has never ceased to operate.

Nor would it be possible here to follow out the equally important history of the politico-ecclesiastical relations between Italy and Rome, or to trace more fully the causes and results of that inherent duality which goes back, as we have seen, to the beginnings of Roman and Italian history. The solution of that

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne, *The Song of the Standard*; Leopardi, *Sopra il Monumento di Dante*.

duality in a higher synthesis was the prophetic message of Virgil, and, in a different way, of Dante also. It still remains an unrealised ideal. The *Fortuna Urbis* of the Roman Empire never became a *Fortuna Italiæ*. Rome, the city, has for just fifty years been the Italian capital; but the spiritual Rome, like her imperial predecessor, has reached out beyond and become separated from Italy in the gigantic effort to include the world.

In the Augustan age the canonisation of Rome was the work of Livy. Virgil's greater aim was the inter-substantiation of Rome and Italy, the creation of a Roman Italy which should also be an Italian Rome. That this was never effected has been the tragedy of history since. If we try to define Virgil's position on the graded scale of patriotism, we may say that he was first and foremost an Italian; that he was a Roman in so far as he identified the mission and the glory of Rome with the glory and the mission of Italy; and that he was a Cisalpine, and more particularly a Mantuan, mainly by blood, birth, and early associations. Of Mantua he speaks over and over again with a thrill of pride and affection: in the *superet modo Mantua nobis* of the *Eclogues* (ix. 27); in the *Et qualem infelix amisit Mantua campum* of the *Georgics* (ii. 198); and most conspicuously in two great passages: the proem to the third *Georgic*, ll. 12-39, beginning with

Primus Idumeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas,

and the passage in the tenth *Æneid* (ll. 198–203):—

Tusci filius amnis  
Qui muros matrisque dedit tibi, Mantua, nomen,  
Mantua, dives avis,

where the personal note of local patriotism in

Ipsa caput populis, Tusco de sanguine vires,

is clear and unmistakable. But the *carità del natio loco*, though strong, was not nearly as powerful in him as that of Florence in Dante. It does not appear that he ever lived in northern Italy after the period of the *Eclogues*. His life was passed, his poetry written, mainly in the centre or the south. Even in the second *Georgic* the reference to his birthplace quoted above is coupled with one to the extreme south, *saltus et saturi longinqua Tarenti*, as a rival affection; and the years of the composition of the *Æneid* were mainly spent in Campania.

For Dante, to be out of Florence was to be in exile. Florence was not only his city, but his *patria terra*, a microcosm of the Italy of his ideals or dreams. He speaks of Florence (*Inferno* xvi. 9) as *nostra terra prava*, just as in the line of the *Paradiso* already quoted he speaks of the *terra prava Italica*. Further, the Italy that he actually knew and cared about was northern Italy. The south, the *corno d'Ausonia*, as he calls it (*Paradiso* viii. 61), is hardly taken into account by him. It was, in fact, a separate kingdom. It does not appear that he was ever in it, or indeed that he was ever even as far south as Rome except on the



embassy of 1300. When he writes (*Convivio* i. 3) that after his banishment, *per le parte quasi tutte alle quali questa lingua si stende peregrino quasi mendicando sono andato*, the words must be taken with this qualification; and even so, stress must be laid on the original as well as the acquired sense of the word *peregrinus*. In these wanderings he felt himself an exile in the full sense; not only a pilgrim, but a foreigner.

The Homeric poems gave some sense of unity, and even of common nationality, to Hellas. Virgil and Dante, more directly and more powerfully, created a sense of the nationality and unity of Italy. The effect of poetry on history is incalculably great: not immediately, it may be, but in its cumulative and often long-deferred action. As poetry is the final distillation of both history and philosophy, the ideal expression towards which both tend, so it re-descends from its own empyrean and acts as a germinal force, vital and constructive (the "shaping spirit" of Coleridge, the "élan vital" of modern thought) to create new philosophy and make new history. The Italy of Virgil and Dante is not yet fully substantialised. This means that their work is not yet fully done. That it will be completed is the faith and the assured hope of England as well as of Italy.



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‘FARINATA’—TRANSLATION

HAROLD E. GOAD.

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“ FARINATA ”

CANTO X

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Now by a secret passage that did wind  
Between the towers and the tormenting fire  
My Master moves and I hold close behind.  
“ O highest Worth, who thro’ these circles dire  
Guidest me as it please thee, now reply,”  
I prayed, “ and satisfy my heart’s desire !  
Might they be seen, the wretched folk who lie  
Within these tombs ? For all the lids are wide  
And there is no one near us to deny.”  
“ All shall be shut down one day,” he replied,  
“ When from Jehoshaphat they sink to gloom  
With the old flesh they laid on earth aside.  
In this part Epicurus hath his tomb  
With all his followers, who in life professed  
That soul and body have a common doom.  
So thou shalt have thy will in this request  
Which thou hast proffered to me, and beside  
In the desire thou holdest unexpressed.”  
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“ O Tuscan, passing thro’ the fiery heat  
Of this fell city, living, stay and rest  
Awhile with me, for so thy words are sweet !

For by thy gentle speech thou art confessed  
A native of that noble fatherland  
Which haply I too sorely did molest."  
This voice so sudden issued close at hand  
From a dark coffer, that I shrank in doubt  
Nearer to him who led me thro' that strand.  
Said he to me, "What dost thou? Turn about!  
Lo! there is Farinata; to thy sight  
Erect waist upward he is raised without."  
Mine eyes already fronted his: upright  
Proudly his brow and bosom did he rear  
As he had very Hell in high despite.

Then with bold hands my Master thrust me near  
To him among the Sepulchres and said,  
"Take heed thy words be ready now and clear!"  
When I had reached the foot of his dark bed,  
Regarding me awhile with some disdain,  
He asked me, "Say, from whom then wast thou  
bred?"  
Frankly I told him all, for I was fain  
To do him favour; whereupon in pride  
He slightly raised his eyebrows, and again,  
"Fierce foes," quoth he, "were they unto my  
side,  
Alike to kindred, party and my heart.  
Yet twice I scattered them!" But I replied,  
"If they were driven forth, from every part  
Each time did they return, but until now  
Your friends have not so aptly learned that art!"



And then beside a Shadow rose, its brow  
 Down to the chin unto my sight showed plain,  
 For it had raised it on its knees, I trow.  
 It peered around me eagerly, as fain  
 To know if, chance, another came with me,  
 But knew at last that its desire was vain,  
 And wept and said : “ If it be thine to see  
 This gloomy prison by exalted mind,  
 Where is my son? Why comes he not with  
 thee? ”

“ Not of myself I come; I could not find  
 Save he who waits me yonder told, the road.  
 Haply your Guido to his worth was blind.”  
 I answered him thus fully, for he showed  
 His name to me by speaking in this wise,  
 And by the penalty of his abode.  
 “ How saidst thou? Was? Lives he no more? ” he  
 cries,

And for an instant all erect upbore,  
 “ Doth the sweet light no longer strike his eyes? ”  
 And then perceiving, I delayed before  
 I found an answer, to his dolorous rest  
 Swift he fell backwards and appeared no more.

But that exalted Soul, at whose request  
 I tarried there, had never turned his head,  
And never a change his pose nor mien expressed.  
 And he pursued his former speech and said,  
 “ And if my party have but badly learned  
 That art, it more torments me than this bed.

But fifty times the face shall not have burned  
Of her who reigneth in this world of sin  
Ere thou have tried it and its weight discerned.

Now so unto the sweet world mayst thou win  
As thou shalt tell me why this race to-day  
Shows in its laws so hostile to my kin? "

I said, " The havoc and the bloody fray  
That dyed the Arbia crimson are the cause,  
Why such vows in our temples yet we pay."

He shook his head and sighed; then after pause,  
" Not sole was I in that, nor had I stirred  
With others in it," quoth he, " without cause!  
Nay, but alone I stood when all conferred  
To blot away fair Florence; undismayed  
Sole I defended her with open word."

" So may thy race have sometime rest," I prayed,  
" Vouchsafe to solve me of the knot that ties  
My judgment and about my mind is laid.

Meseems you see beforehand that which lies  
Still in Time's bosom,—if I hear aright,—  
But with the present it is otherwise."

" We see," he said, " like one that hath weak sight:  
And unto things afar we are not blind,  
For still the great God gives us so much light.

But when events draw nigh, or are, our mind  
Is vain and void of all, and nothing knows  
Save others bring us tidings of mankind.

So mayst thou see how all our knowledge goes  
To darkness one day, from the moment when  
The future's gate for evermore shall close."

Then with remorse my fault came to my ken ;  
 I said, “ Now pray you tell that fallen shade  
 That still his child is joinéd unto men.

And when he asked before, if I delayed,  
 Tell him it was because I did debate  
 That very error that your words have laid.”

And now my Master called me back, whereat  
 I pressed that spirit with more eager prayer  
 To tell what souls were joined with him in fate.

“ Beyond a thousand are with me, and there,”  
 Said he, “ the second Frederick lies in pain,  
 The Cardinal, and many that I spare.”

Wherewith he sank and passed from sight again. -

. . . . .

*after  
 explaining  
 who the other  
 damned souls  
 are with  
 him  
 legally,  
 Louis & himself  
 had share.*





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NOTES ON THE DATE OF COMPOSITION  
OF THE 'DE MONARCHIA'

CESARE FOLIGNO.

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## NOTES ON THE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF THE "DE MONARCHIA"

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ACCORDING to Boccaccio, Dante wrote the *De Monarchia* during the Italian expedition of Henry VII,<sup>1</sup> but the treatise was scarcely known until Louis of Bavaria availed himself of it in order to justify his disloyal behaviour towards the Pope of the time.<sup>2</sup> In modern days Boccaccio's account was challenged, and different dates of composition were suggested, so that it would seem a task equally presumptuous and hopeless to attempt a solution of the problem. Nevertheless each student of Dante has been compelled to accept one of the solutions which had been previously proposed, or to suggest a new,

<sup>1</sup> GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *La Vita di Dante*, edited by A. Solerti, Milan, Vallardi, s.a. ("Storia letteraria d'Italia scritta da una società di professori"), § 16, p. 61: "Similmente questo egregio autore nella venuta di Arrigo VII imperadore fece un libro in latina prosa, il cui titolo è *Monarchia*." P. 62: "E nata poi in molti casi della sua (of Louis of Bavaria) autorità questione, egli e' suoi seguaci, trovato questo libro, . . . molti degli argomenti in esso posti cominciarono a usare; per la qual cosa il libro, il quale fino allora appena era saputo, divenne famoso."

<sup>2</sup> For a bibliography of the subject the following may be consulted: A. D'ANCONA, *Il "De Monarchia,"* Lectura Dantis. Le opere minori. Florence, Sansoni, 1906, p. 247, n. 2; C. SAUTER, *Dante's "Monarchie" übersetzt u. erklärt*, Freiburg i. B., Herder, 1913, pp. 74 seq.; Zingarelli, *Dante* ("Storia letteraria d'Italia scritta da una società di professori"), Milan, Vallardi, s.a. (1899-1903), pp. 731-2.

answer to the riddle, because our conception of Dante's political ideals and their historical development hangs upon it. Even Dr. Vossler and Prof. Gentile—and no one is less inclined to linger upon minute points of irrelevant scholarship—have been forced to face this difficulty.

In such circumstances the re-statement of the question may not be fruitless (I have no more ambitious object in view), even though it may lead very little farther than the simple acceptance of Boccaccio's account. 1300, 1310-11, 1313, 1314, 1315, 1317, 1319 and 1320 have all been suggested as possible birth years of the *De Monarchia*. It was Karl Witte who first effectively challenged tradition,<sup>1</sup> and the main internal objections were clearly seen by him. He pointed out that at the very beginning of the treatise Dante wrote: "Quumque . . . temporalis monarchia notitia utilissima sit, et maxime latens et . . . ab omnibus intentata,"<sup>2</sup> and that such a statement cannot be explained unless Dante was writing it before Boniface's bull "Unam Sanctam" (1302), so that Dante would have entered the fray practically at a time when Pope Boniface VIII and his supporters were counteracting the controversial onslaught engineered by the King of France.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Witte also saw the

<sup>1</sup> KARL WITTE, *Dantis Alligherii "De Monarchia," libri II codicum manuscriptorum ope emendati*, ed. altera, Vindobonæ, Braumüller, 1874, pp. xxxv. seq.

<sup>2</sup> *Tutte le opere di DANTE ALIGHIERI*, ed. Moore (Oxford Dante), 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 1904, p. 341, *De Monarchia* i. 1, 14-19 and 27-35.

<sup>3</sup> For this controversy see CARLO CIPOLLA, *Il trattato "De Monarchia"*

objection based on the reading of the manuscripts in *De Monarchia* i. 8, 41,<sup>1</sup> which contains a reference to the *Paradiso*, but did not think it strong enough to weaken the convincing effect of his previous remarks, especially as he considered the reading of the manuscripts to be the interpolation of a marginal note. It was Dr. Witte who suggested the emendation which is still printed in the "Oxford Dante," but, as was natural, other scholars felt more strongly impressed by that passage, and it was found that in *De Monarchia* iii. 4 Dante favours those theories about the spots in the moon which Beatrice explains in *Paradiso* ii. 58 seq., refuting in that canto the explanation he had previously accepted in *Convivio* ii. 14. As these Dantists held the *Paradiso* to have been begun not earlier than 1315 or 1317, the composition of the *De Monarchia* was forced forward to 1317 or 1319 or later.<sup>2</sup>

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*di Danti Alighieri e l'opuscolo "De potestate regia et papali" di Giovanni da Parigi*, in "Memorie della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino," Serie II, classe di scienze morali, storiche, filologiche, T. XLII, pp. 325-419; and P. SCHOLZ, *Die Publizistik zur Zeit Philipps des schönen u. Bonifaz VIII*, Stuttgart, 1903.

<sup>1</sup> KARL WITTE, *Dantis Alligherii "De Monarchia,"* p. 49. "Gravissimum certe omnium, quæ contra me pugnare videntur, est argumentum, quod ipse primus in luce protraxi, et quo neminem adversariorum usum esse, profecto miror: citatio inquam *Paradisi*, quam libri I, cap. 12, textus latini codici fere omnes . . . exhibent. . . . Qui contrarium sentit, necessario *Monarchiæ* compositionem in ultimos omnino vitæ Dantis annos rejicere debet quod fieri non posse hodie omnes consentiunt."

<sup>2</sup> FRANZ XAVIER KRAUS, *Dante. Sein Leben u. sein Werk, sein Verhältniss zur Kunst u. Politik*, Berlin, Grote, 1897, pp. 275 and 277; NICOLA ZINGARELLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-7; C. SAUTER, *op. cit.*, p. 76.



Yet another passage of *Paradiso*<sup>1</sup> has been pointed out in which Dante seems to correct an opinion he had expressed in the *De Monarchia* ii. 8, and in order to reconcile the various conflicting theories Professor Villari proposed a compromise, by suggesting that the first and second books were written at an early date, Witte's date, and that, after a long interruption, Dante added a third book during the imperial expedition.<sup>2</sup>

Villari's was the last attempt to save any part of Witte's theory<sup>3</sup>; most students of the question prefer either the traditional or the later date. Dr. Vossler favours the later date, being impressed by a change in Dante's philosophical opinions, which he traces in the *De Monarchia*, as though Dante were following less obediently Aquinas and accepting some Averrhoistic ideas.<sup>4</sup> Professor Gentile, on the other hand, does not lay special stress on the solution of the chronological problem and does not give any new

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, xix. 64-9.

Lume non è, se non vien dal Sereno  
che non si turba mai; anzi è tenèbra,  
od ombra della carne, o suo veleno.

Assai t'è mo aperta la latebra  
che t'ascondeva la giustizia viva,  
di che facèi question cotanto crebra.

<sup>2</sup> PASQUALE VILLARI, *Il "De Monarchia" di Dante Alighieri*, in "Nuova Antologia," February 1, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> H. GRAUERT, *Dante u. die Idee des Weltfriedens*, Munich, 1909, pp. 5-42, also favours the date suggested by Dr. Witte, in this as well as in other Dantesque works.

<sup>4</sup> KARL VOSSLER, *Die göttliche Komödie*, I Band, II Teil, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1907, pp. 552-3.

reasons in support of the theory he favours,<sup>1</sup> but the close study of other Dantesque questions brought to light many facts which seem consistent with the traditional, but not with a later date. Dr. Witte had realised from the outset that Dante used in his political letters<sup>2</sup> several of the arguments which he expanded in the *De Monarchia*, but he considered it unlikely that Dante should use the same line of reasoning twice at the same date, first in an epistle, and later in a general treatise. Dr. Witte's facts were right, but his inferences were clearly mistaken; and his error was easily proved. It was left for Professor Parodi to expound a closely-knitted theory showing that Dante's political thought evolved by degrees; that the identity of political opinions, when clearly demonstrable, is the strongest possible argument in favour of contemporaneous composition, and that the *De Monarchia* must have been written, therefore, at the same time as the letters. Professor Parodi is even averse to accepting the slightly later date suggested by Professor Chiappelli.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the discussion was not primarily chronological, it depended upon

<sup>1</sup> GIOVANNI GENTILE, *La profezia di Dante*, in "Nuova Antologia," May 1, 1918, pp. 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> The three letters are dated September or October 1310 (V.), March 31, 1311 (VI.); April 17, 1311 (VII.). See *Dantis Alagherii epistolæ*, emended text, by Paget Toynbee, M.A., D.Litt. Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1920, pp. 42, 63 and 82.

<sup>3</sup> E. G. PARODI, review of *Egidio Gorra, Quando Dante scrisse la "Divina Commedia"*, in "Bullettino della società dantesca," N.S., vol. xv., 1908, pp. 11-24; and review of *Franz Kampers, Dantes Kaisertraum*, etc., in "Bullettino della società dantesca," N.S., vol. xvi., 1909, pp. 286-9.

entirely different views about the treatise. In point of fact, Chiappelli, in the course of a special study which was intended to test Dante's knowledge of law, became convinced that Dante was well versed in Roman law and familiar with the principal currents of juridical study in his age,<sup>1</sup> and he urged that the *De Monarchia* was a reply to the main plea contained in a message sent by King Robert of Naples to the Pope,<sup>2</sup> and that the relation between the two works was too close to be accidental.<sup>3</sup>

It became highly probable that Dante's treatise was, if only in part, a reply to King Robert's message, and therefore slightly later than the message itself. The juridical tone of this document suggests that the writer was the lawyer Jacopo Bel Viso,<sup>4</sup> and by internal evidence the date was limited to the first months of 1313. On the contrary, Parodi maintains that no such occasional source of inspiration can be accepted because the substance of the treatise is to be found in the political letters, and he affirms that Dante, from the day of Henry's arrival in Italy, had been meditating upon the problem of the relations between the Empire and the Papacy.

<sup>1</sup> LUIGI CHIAPPELLI, *Dante in rapporto alle fonti del diritto ed alla letteratura giuridica del suo tempo*, in "Archivio storico italiano," Serie V, vol. xli., 1908, pp. 1 seq.

<sup>2</sup> F. BONAINI, *Acta Henrici VII*, Florence, 1877, No. CXLII, pp. 233 seq.

<sup>3</sup> LUIGI CHIAPPELLI, *Sull' età del "De Monarchia,"* in "Archivio storico italiano," Serie V, T. XLIII, 1909, pp. 237-56.

<sup>4</sup> p. 239, *Ibid.*, note.



Signor Chiaudano, by seeking to disprove Chiappelli's conclusions about Dante's knowledge of Roman law and urging that the *De Monarchia* is a philosophical, not a juridical treatise,<sup>1</sup> called forth a reply from Chiappelli which contains further instances of passages in Dante's work which seem to evince a close familiarity with the Digestum,<sup>2</sup> and Chiappelli further explained that, in his view, Dante did not intend to write a juridical, but a philosophical treatise, and to derive from general principles, by philosophical reasoning, the conclusions which formed the object of legal controversy. In this, according to Professors Solmi<sup>3</sup> and Ercole,<sup>4</sup> lies the novelty of the *De Monarchia* and the justification of the words written by Dante in its first chapter. Yet another document has been discovered which seems clearly connected with the *De Monarchia*, and which is dated 1313.<sup>5</sup> Hence it may be assumed that by two rational demonstrations, independent of one another, the issue was narrowed down, to all practical purposes, to the years

<sup>1</sup> MARIO CHIAUDANO, *Dante e il diritto romano*, in "Il giornale dantesco," vol. xx., 1912, pp. 37-56, 94-119.

<sup>2</sup> LUIGI CHIAPPELLI, *Ancora su Dante e il diritto romano*, in "Il giornale dantesco," vol. xx., 1912, pp. 202-6.

<sup>3</sup> ARRIGO SOLMI, review of Fritz Kern, *Acta Imperii Angliæ et Franciæ, 1267-1313*, in "Bullettino della società dantesca," N.S., vol. xviii., 1911, pp. 251-4.

<sup>4</sup> FRANCESCO ERCOLE, review of Mario Chiaudano, *Dante e il diritto romano*, in "Bullettino della società dantesca italiana," N.S., vol. xx., 1913, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> FRITZ KERN, *Acta Imperii Angliæ et Franciæ, ab a. 1267 ad a. 1313*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1911, pp. 244 seq., No. 295. The document is incomplete and is connected with the sentence passed by Henry VII on Robert of Anjou on April 26, 1313.

1311-1314. Thus the date of composition which was traditionally accepted upon Boccaccio's authority, is corroborated by internal evidence, as shown by Professor Parodi; it is accepted by many scholars,<sup>1</sup> it seems consistent with the contemporary political conditions and with Dante's position at that period, and is further endorsed by an independent research on the history of law. Gentile does not seem to press strongly for a later date; Vossler's strictures seem insufficient to outweigh the facts which run counter to them, and Dr. Kraus, and especially Professor Zingarelli, rely mainly on the evidence of a passage which seems to allow for another explanation. And since the approximate date 1313 is favoured by an overwhelming array of facts and inferences, and stands out as by far the most probable, one may consider it a legitimate process to explain away the one fact which, at first sight, prevents the general acceptance of that date.

Henry's plans and promises had stirred up new hopes; they were hailed with enthusiasm by all those who were distressed by contemporary conditions or suffered from them; by none other with more confident expectation than Dante. He followed the Emperor in person for a time, and he followed him constantly in thought; he endeavoured even, to the best of his abilities, to remove some of the difficulties

<sup>1</sup> Also FRITZ KERN (*Humana Civilitas* [*Staat Kirche und Kultur*]: *eine Dante Untersuchung*, Leipsic, Köhler, 1913, ch. II) accepts the date 1313-1314; see also E. G. PARODI, *Del concetto dell' Impero in Dante e del suo averroismo*, in "Bullettino della società dantesca," N.S., vol. xxvi., 1919, p. 133.

of Henry's imperial policy by writing the political letters. By gradual steps he adapted to the new conditions the political theories which he had derived from Aristotle and Aquinas; he was constantly in fear lest the support of Clement V, never truly cordial and unqualified, should be withdrawn from the Emperor, and he became convinced that the Pope had no right to oppose the well-meant plans that the sovereign proposed to carry out. According to Dante, such a position was insufficiently demonstrated by mere legal arguments, and he developed a philosophical theory by which his hopes and the imperial intentions and contentions were proved just and necessary. In this way the requirements of his intellect, trained as it was on philosophical thought, were satisfied,<sup>1</sup> and he wished that all his contemporaries, or at least those among them who took a side in politics by conviction, and not only on account of factious sentiment or interests, would share the advantage of a theory which seemed to him true, and, as such, completely satisfied his intellectual needs. From internal conviction he drew the moral force to write his political letters, and in the letters he gave clear hints of his theory; but meanwhile he perfected his political theory, perhaps during 1311 and 1312, or even put it on paper in part. When he became acquainted with King Robert's letter which embodied the lawyer's *Bel Viso* specious pleading, he borrowed from the lawyers some of their phraseology, but meant

<sup>1</sup> *De Monarchia* i. 1, 32-9.



to write, and did write, a work that was new (*"ab omnibus intentatum"*), which probed deeper into the matter than any lawyer had attempted to probe in the past, and the treatise he called *De Monarchia*.

We must face now the crucial objection to the 1313 date. Dr. Bertalot's edition shows that all manuscripts contain the incidental sentence<sup>1</sup> that Dr. Witte partly excised and after him was generally omitted or amended by the editors of the *De Monarchia*. The correct reading of *De Monarchia* i. 12, 41 is "*sicut in Paradiso Comœdiæ iam dixi*," and not, as the sentence runs in the "Oxford Dante," among other editions, "*sicut dixit*." Professor Chiappelli was impressed by the implicit reference to *Paradiso* v. in the passage, even though he accepted the emended reading, and suggested a date rather later than mere considerations of fact require. King Robert's message must have been written between January 1 and April 26, 1313, for reasons that Chiappelli explains; Dante appears to have been cognisant of the Angevin document, at least when he wrote the second and third books of his treatise, and alludes indirectly to King Robert's refusal to appear before the imperial court, a fact which led to his condemnation on April 26; he gives no hint of the bull "*Pastoralis cura*" (March 13, 1314), so that Chiappelli suggests that the *De Monarchia* cannot have been composed later than

<sup>1</sup> *Dantis Alagherii "De Monarchia," libri III, rec. LUDOVICUS BERTALOT, Friedrichsdorf in Monte Tauno apud Francofurtum apud editorem, 1918, p. 27.*

March 1314, nor earlier than April 1313.<sup>1</sup> It seems scarcely credible that Dante should have written any considerable part of his treatise, and far less initiated such a work, after Henry's death. Though it is not an occasional writing, an item in a long controversy, the book was composed with only one conceivable object—to uphold imperial claims against the debaters belonging to the Church party. Dante may well have continued the composition of the *Commedia* (some say begun) after Henry's death, but what could have prompted him to undertake such a work as the *De Monarchia* while the Imperial throne was vacant? One may grant the possibility that he completed some small section of it after the tragedy of Buonconvento (August 24, 1313), but he would surely not have been so foolhardy as to circulate such a work in circumstances so perilous. Chiappelli's suggestion that perhaps the condemnation of the Florentine exiles of November 6, 1315, and the exclusion of some of them from the benefits of the amnesty granted in 1316 to many of them, are to be taken as King Robert's revenge against Dante for the writing of the *De Monarchia*, is a suggestion which seems equally unlikely and unnecessary.<sup>2</sup> More probably, while still waiting for an occasion to circulate his treatise, or perhaps while still composing the last paragraphs of it, Dante learned of the Emperor's demise. The treatise lost any immediate value and, if known, would have

<sup>1</sup> CHIAPPELLI, *Sull' età del "De Monarchia," op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

rendered more dangerous the position of an exile who had no reason to look confidently to the future, and who, from the letter to a friend in Florence,<sup>1</sup> would appear to have entertained some vague hope of being recalled to Florence.

And yet the incidental sentence of i. 12, 41 shows that the manuscript whence all the extant copies of the *De Monarchia* derive was still in Dante's hands at a later date. No one would argue that before August 1313 Dante had already written five cantos of the *Paradiso*, and the sentence can scarcely be explained away as an interpolated marginal note,<sup>2</sup> so that we are compelled to find an occasion for the insertion of such a sentence by Dante himself. It is generally held that Dante was not given to correcting and polishing his works; the more cogent therefore the reason to suggest an explanation for the departure from custom that we note in this case. We know that the *Paradiso* was dedicated to Cangrande della Scala, and that Dante must have sent the first cantos of the poem to Cangrande, together with the dedicatory letter,<sup>3</sup> and it would seem natural to think that the *De Monarchia* also was given or sent by Dante to the lord of Verona, as no one else could quite as probably have been expected to be familiar with a canto of the *Paradiso*, nor so keen on reading a treatise in which the rights of the Emperor were upheld. Was not

<sup>1</sup> PAGET TOYNBEE, *op. cit.*, pp. 148 seq.; see especially p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> ZINGARELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

<sup>3</sup> PAGET TOYNBEE, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-211; especially p. 165.



Cangrande the mainstay of the Ghibelline party in Italy, and was he not *Vicarius imperialis* since 1312 and captain-general of the Ghibelline league in Lombardy since 1318? The reasons which Professor Zingarelli assigns in support of his dating the composition of the *De Monarchia* 1319 or later could be repeated, with a greater force, as favouring the circulation of the treatise about that time.<sup>1</sup> Any attempt to reach a more precise date would probably be both irrelevant and pedantic; one might think that, in discharge of his obligations as a guest and a protégé, the poet offered to Cangrande, at the first favourable opportunity, the treatise he had written some time previously, just as he had offered to Cangrande the first cantos of the *Paradiso* before the completion of the poem; or one might connect such a presentation with a renewal of political controversial writings such as Zingarelli mentions, and one might even think of such an occasion as the debate which gave rise to the "*Quæstio de aqua et terra*," which was also sent to Cangrande; but any such suggestion would lack corroboration. It has been pleaded<sup>2</sup> that the incidental sentence is not Dantesque in manner because Dante does not quote in the *De Monarchia* any part of the *Convivio*, where he had dealt with some of the most relevant points on which he was touching again, and would not have been likely to quote the *Paradiso*, an incomplete poem, on a side issue. Once more the

<sup>1</sup> ZINGARELLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-5, 426-7.

<sup>2</sup> SAUTER, *op. cit.*, p. 106, note I.

facts, not the conclusions, are correct. But the facts would allow for an explanation if the *De Monarchia* was sent or given to Cangrande together with, or shortly after the tenth letter, because the Lord of Verona could well be supposed to have been unacquainted with the *Convivio*, but must have been familiar with the first cantos of the *Paradiso*.<sup>1</sup>

It might also be argued further, if even this were not really of little import, that Dante offered the *De Monarchia* after he had composed the fifth, and before he completed the nineteenth, canto of the *Paradiso*, because in the latter canto he seems at pains to correct (ll. 64 seq.) what he had written in *De Monarchia* ii. 8 about the limitations of human reason.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course most of the upholders of a late composition think that the book treatise was written at Verona or sent to Cangrande. ZINGARELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 427; HERMANN GRAUERT, *Zur Danteforschung*, in "Historisch. Jahrbuch," vol. xiv. (1895), p. 539; A. GASPARY, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Italian edition, vol. i., pp. 248 seq.

<sup>2</sup> MICHELE SCHERILLO, review of *Tito Bottagisio, Il limbo dantesco*, in "Bullettino della società dantesca," N.S., vol. viii, p. 14.

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# DANTE AND THE LATIN POETS

P. H. WICKSTEED.

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## DANTE AND THE LATIN POETS <sup>1</sup>

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GREAT literature was open to Dante in three vernacular languages: in French there were the "bewitching meanderings" of Arthurian Romance; in Provençal there was the finished art with which the troubadours sang of Love and War; and the Italian successors of the Provençal poets, with their wider outlook and their profounder thought, had learned that the courtly graces of valour, gallantry and generosity did not in themselves fill up the measure of greatness in human character. What Dante calls "Virtue"—we may paraphrase it as "nobility of character"—touched them to finer issues and drew them into nearer fellowship with the sovran poets of antiquity.

But who were these sovran poets? Homer was only a great name to Dante and his compatriots, and Greek poetry was a sealed book. Moreover Dante,

<sup>1</sup> For a full treatment of the quotations from the Latin poets and the references to them in Dante's works, Dr. Moore's great essay in the first series of his *Dante Studies* (Oxford, 1896) and the several articles in Dr. Paget Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary* are the classical authorities.

*De Vulgari Eloquentia*, i. 10: 19; ii. 2: 70-98 (where, however, Dante's distinction between the Troubadours and the Italians does not coincide with the one I have drawn).

at least, well knew that whatever beauty in the Hebrew poets had survived translation, all the "charm of music and harmony" had necessarily vanished. The Latin poets alone were left. And of them two of the greatest, in modern estimation, were unknown to Dante; for in spite of at least one striking coincidence of imagery, it seems clear that he was unacquainted with Lucretius; and, unlike his contemporary, Albertino Mussato, he shows no trace of familiarity with Catullus.

This leaves Virgil as the one poet whom posterity has placed in the supreme rank (not quite unchallenged) with whose work Dante was intimate at first hand.

I suppose this is the explanation of the passage in the first Canto of the *Inferno* which has given the commentators so much trouble. Dante there declares to Virgil that he owes to him, and to no other, that "beauteous style that has won him honour." What traces of Virgil's poetic style or diction—as compared with those of the two Guidos, for instance—can be found in Dante's work before 1300, or even before the date, whatever it may be, of the actual composition of the Comedy, to justify this declaration? The only answer seems to be that Virgil had taught Dante what great style is, and that it was only under the pressure of the immeasurably larger and fuller

*Convivio* i. 7: 91-103.

*De Rerum Nat.* ii. 114 sqq.; *Paradiso* xiv. 112 sqq.

*Inferno*, i. 85 sqq.





PLATE V.—INFERNO, Canto XV.

(*Sandro Botticelli*)

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*[Handwritten signature]*



vein of the great Epic that the imagination of the vernacular poet, pressing against the limits of the Canzone (the highest recognised form of Italian poetry), could bring it to its stateliest height.

Whatever may be thought of this suggestion, it is certain that Virgil's influence upon Dante is not only greater than that of all the other Latin poets put together, but that it is distinguished by a certain intimacy of penetration that makes it stand alone. Virgil affected much more than Dante's "style," and furnished him with much more than models and materials for his epic. He heightened the native power of his imagination and ennobled his thought and feeling, as well as enriching his power of expression. Hence we can often say of Dante that where he is most closely or obviously Virgilian he is at the same time most truly himself. Who would dream of saying, for instance, that the great scene in which Cavalcante interrupts the dialogue between Dante and Farinata lacks originality, or has not the specific Dantesque note? To feel the close parallel between it and the meeting of Æneas and Andromache in the third *Æneid* is only to deepen the intensity of its appeal. Even where the parallel is so close as to enable us to determine a disputed reading, we can speak of influence, but hardly of imitation. I refer to a passage in the third Canto of the *Inferno*. Virgil speaks in the second *Georgic* of the fruit-tree on which an alien shoot had been grafted looking up with glad

*Inferno* x. 52 sqq. *Æneid* iii. 306 sqq.



wonder at the mighty branch that has sprung from it, and on the "fruits that are not its own." Hence when Dante compares the flitting ghosts falling feebly into Charon's boat to the leaves that drop from a branch, till, naked and desolate, it "gazes upon all its stripped-off foliage" lying at its feet, we know that *vede*, not the rival reading of *rende*, is what Dante wrote. The passage is no imitation of Virgil, though but for him it might never have been written, and he can give us a touchstone to tell us how it was phrased. It is needless to multiply examples. They crowd upon the mind. This intimate transfusion of Virgil's greatness into the very sap of Dante's poetic vitality is the more remarkable because of the divergence, amounting often to the sharpest contrast, between the methods and characteristics of the genius of the two poets. An instance of this may be found in the treatment of the monsters of mythology in the sixth *Æneid* and the *Inferno* respectively. Virgil's imaginative power is nowhere more apparent than in the atmosphere he creates as Æneas stands in the very jaws of hell. All images of gloom and misery, Death, Disease and Dismal Eld, Foul Imaginations of Evil, and death-like Torpor, are just touched into semi-personification, as they crowd, together with Centaurs, Harpies, the threefold Geryon and twi-form Chæmeras, to create a vague atmosphere of horror; but there is not a word of description. It is all impressionist. We *see* nothing distinctly,

*Georgic* ii. 82. *Inferno* iii. 114.

but we feel the deepening effect of every stroke. Now mark the strict "economy" with which Dante introduces his Harpies, his Centaurs and the rest, just where each has its specific meaning and gives its definite support to the architecture of the poem. And note how Dante makes us see each one of the uncanny forms with a vivid distinctness that is the despair of artists. In this instance Virgil's stupendous imagination is of no use to Dante. He wants the material for other purposes. He takes it clean out of the marvellous atmosphere with which Virgil has surrounded it and deals with it in quite other fashion. And he can afford to do so; for Virgil's imagination has impregnated his own, and will vitalise it everywhere. It need not be imported in its fixed mould. Dante has moulds of his own to fill.

But having said all this, we have still, in a sense, only touched on the relatively superficial aspects of Virgil's influence on Dante; for it was in very truth Virgil that brought Dante back to Beatrice and so gave us the Comedy. That Dante had that in him which must have found great utterance even had he never met Beatrice or read Virgil, it would be rash indeed to deny; but that without them he could have written the Comedy is plainly impossible. And of these two our immediate concern is with Virgil.

I do not think any one can read the *Convivio* with

*Aeneid* vi. 273 sqq.

*Inferno* ix. 46 sqq., 52; xii. 55 sqq.; xiii. 10; xvii.

an open mind and fail to accept Dante's very frank confession—with whatever formal reservation it is made—that when he wrote it he had (to state it baldly) outgrown the *Vita Nuova* and Beatrice's dominating influence. He had formless enthusiasms and aspirations struggling within him that could no longer be kept within the limitations of that early vow which embalmed the tender memories of youth, already half-submerged under the storm and pressure of manhood. But there is no coherence in the different motives that inspire the author of the *Convivio*. Self-justification as to his own private character and his political record, a missionary and prophetic ardour as a teacher of Philosophy to the laity and a preacher of righteousness to all and sundry, a loving desire to handle his own poems and talk to the world about them, together with an uneasy sense that some of them tell a tale that scarcely harmonises with his present rôle as a preacher, the promptings of the mere smith and wielder of words within him, urging him to show what Italian can do in prose, as he has already shown what it can do in rhyme—all these and other impulses jostle each other in this amazing work, the formlessness of which is as astonishing as its wealth and beauty. In this gorgeous jungle there is only one really formative indication of the plan for which its exuberant vitality was ultimately to make way. It is to be found in the two chapters of the fourth Treatise, in which the character and significance of

*Convivio* ii. 16 : 48 sqq ; i. 2 : 114-130.



the Roman Empire are sketched. And this he owed to Virgil.

Before he came under Virgil's deeper influence (as we can read quite clearly on, or between, the lines of the *De Monarchia*) the history of the human race was divided for Dante by a sharp line into sacred and secular. The history of Israel, culminating in the manifestation of the Incarnate Word and the founding of the Church, was divinely guided in every smallest incident; and accordingly every detail was significant. It was not only something that God *did*, but also, if we could rightly interpret it, something that he *said* for our guidance or instruction. But the secular history of the world was a mere welter of senseless violence that had no scheme, no development, and no purpose. Into this chaos Virgil brought order. No Roman writer ever had so clear a vision of Rome's mission as had he. It was he who taught Dante that force was only the instrument of Roman power, and that Law was its soul. Justinian lived five centuries and more after Virgil, but nevertheless it was Virgil whose description of Rome's mission taught Dante to find in the great law-giver its truest representative. In all his mature work you will find that by the Roman Empire Dante means the supremacy of Roman law, and by the Roman Emperor the God-commissioned administrator—faithful or faithless as the case may be—of that most august of all instruments for regulating

*Convivio* iv. 4, 5.

*De Monarchia* ii. 1: 11-17; 5: 15-42; 7: 59-77. *Paradiso* vi.

the relations of men and of nations under the guidance of justice and along the paths of peace.

What a flood of light this reclaiming of secular history, as within the range of the providential government of the world, threw back upon all Dante's own past life ! The obscure conflicts of Florentine factions were now seen (as they had always been darkly felt) to turn upon the re-vindication of the Roman tradition of industrial civilisation against the feudal barbarism of the military invaders ; for—let it once again be said—the inner meaning of Roman history was not that of victorious war, but that of established peace. Henceforth there were two sacred histories to Dante, the history of Palestine and the history of Rome.

To readers of the *De Monarchia* and the Comedy it is not necessary to dwell upon the elaborate parallels between the two providentially guided histories that are motived in the former work and developed all through the latter, from the first bracketing of Æneas and Paul onwards. Of this parallelism the *Convivio* contains the germ, but the germ only, and when we notice that in that work all the stress is laid on the secular side (the sacred side being taken for granted, quite heartily, even fervently, but receiving no distinctive impress), we are led to the closer consideration of a curious feature in the *Convivio* that has constituted a standing perplexity to Dantists, and that brought confusion into Witte's memorable attempt to co-ordinate Dante's works in some

*Inferno* ii. 13 sqq., 28 sqq.

intelligible and organic relation to each other. I refer to the fact that though Dante, when he wrote the *Convivio*, was already an eager student of Aquinas and accepted in perfect faith the supreme authority of the Church—the “secretary and spouse of God,” as he calls her—and though he expressly places Revelation above Reason, yet the flow of his active thought and affection seems to run almost exclusively within the realm of the Aristotelian philosophy and to fertilise the secular side of life and government. Even when he is speaking of the martyrs and confessors who held all material things cheap in comparison with truth and holiness, Dante’s examples are taken from the lives of Pagan philosophers, not of Christian saints; and the passages of splendid eloquence which he borrows from the discourses of Aquinas on the truths of Revelation and the supreme authority of the Pope he applies (in this last instance even in the *De Monarchia*) to the speculations of Philosophy and the authority of the Emperor.

In like manner, in the *Convivio*, the Lady of Dante’s “Second Love” is “Wisdom” herself. Her range is vaguely comprehensive. She stands alike for Grammar and Arithmetic on the one hand, and on the other for the supreme and queenly science of Theology, and whereas at one time she can be adequately symbolised by a Gentle Lady whose pitying

*Convivio* ii. 15: 124-127; iv. 30: 24-30; ii. 4: 30-32; 6: 33 sq. iv. 15: 90-96; ii. 6: 16-20; iii. 14: 69-86; i. 1. *Contra Gentiles* i. 4. *De Monarchia* i. 14: 38-65. *Contra Gentiles* iv. 76.



sympathy gives Dante's grieving soul the relief of tears, at another she is the Divine Wisdom's self, the Word who became incarnate for our salvation. But through it all the centre of gravity is still on the secular side, and we feel that both Dante's heart and his mind draw their true nourishment from the sages of the Pagan world. The Christian contrast between the Active life of good works and the ministrations of religion on the one side, and the Contemplative life of the saintly mystic on the other, has not yet disengaged itself in his thought from the Aristotelian distinction between the social activities of the citizen and the devotion of philosophic leisure to speculation ranging over the whole realm of truth. So, too, the distinction between Reason and Revelation, though quite explicitly recognised, leads up to no distinction between Church and State, and is practically merged in the Aristotelian contrast just referred to between the civic and the philosophic life.

What then is the exact position in which we find Dante at this point of his career? The *Vita Nuova* stands as the record of his impressionable youth. He will not cancel it, but his mind is now full of other things suiting the robuster fibre of maturity. Aristotle has inspired him with a passion for study. His own participation in the affairs of his city has widened his outlook upon the practical side of life and quickened his insight into human character. And Virgil

*Convivio* ii. 14: 47-66; iii. 14: 61-64; 15: 182 sqq.; ii. 9: 126 sqq.; iii. 7: 161-166; i. 1: 111 sqq.



PLATE VI.—INFERNO, Canto XXXIII.

(*Luca Signorelli*)

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is beginning to teach him to look upon a social and political life of ordered peace and harmony, giving scope to the nobler faculties and affections, as a holy thing, designed by the Creator from the beginning for man to enjoy.

But the equilibrium of the *Convivio* is in all respects unstable, and it is no accident that the work remained a fragment. Dante was a Christian, and as such he inherited that Christian conception of holiness which tends to make every great emotion, at its highest, partake of the nature of worship. But hitherto his mysticism, if we may so call it, though of heavenly origin, had breathed itself most fully into earthly things. The Empire was in fact, if not in theory, more to Dante than the Church, science dearer than contemplation, and the Temporal more real than the Eternal. Even his study of theology bore its first-fruits only in a heightened sense of the significance of Politics.

This was the beginning, but it could not be the end. A Christian believer who in his ardour for knowledge, in his ideal of personal greatness of character, and in his practical political inspirations, was uplifted and stimulated by the greatest theologian of his day, must sooner or later turn his thoughts directly to the problems of the Church herself, to the relations of the Temporal to the Spiritual Power, and to the direct bearing of the dogmas and devotions of the Church upon the actual life of the human soul. In a word, he cannot permanently confine his intensest

feeling within the world of Ethnic philosophy; but must explore and assimilate—not only acknowledge—the realms of Christian truth. Virgil, having brought Dante from Athens to Imperial Rome, must see him pass out of his care into regions beyond his range. The Roman chapters of the *Convivio* must reveal themselves as the stepping-stones to the *De Monarchia* and the Comedy.

The direct occasion of this development was the election of Henry of Luxemburg in 1309 and his avowed purpose of coming to Italy as a peace-maker, to restore the exiles, to reconcile the factions, and to inaugurate a new epoch in the history of distracted Italy. The attitude assumed by the Pope to Henry might be of critical importance to the issue, and Dante's thoughts were necessarily directed to it. Of the mission of the Roman Empire he had already a clear conception, but what was its relation to the mission of the Church? The answer to this question was already held in solution in his mind and only needed precipitation. As the Empire had charge of all happenings and successions that took place in time, so the Church was the appointed guide to the eternal life of the soul. As the Fall of man had thrown in the parenthesis of mortal life between Eden and the Beatific Vision, so also it had thrown the long and dismal parenthesis of human history between the loss and the recovery of Eden itself. The Church was the appointed organ of revealed truth, commissioned to hold man in touch, through all his wanderings,

with his eternal destiny, and in like manner the Roman Empire was commissioned to hold men in peaceful and helpful relations with each other, guided by all such truth as could keep their hearts in touch with the life of Eden.

This connection between the ideal Empire, fostering and protecting the natural expansion of the higher faculties of man, and the life of Innocence before the Fall, is formulated with the utmost precision and earnestness by Dante in the concluding passages of the *De Monarchia*. He verily believed that the poetic pictures of the Golden Age preserved a dim tradition of that life of innocence in which human passion and delight had needed no jealous watching and could never betray; and he believed, too, that in proportion as the spirit of justice and zeal for the common good, as manifested in the history and the Law of Rome, were faithful and victorious, in that proportion would mankind, in the progress of civilisation, receive the consecration and recover the atmosphere of Eden.

This life of earthly innocence, as a stage in the experience of man, seemed to Dante no less essential to the full realisation of the creative plan than did the heavenly glory as its goal. And if, at best, civilisation could only give an imperfect reflection of Eden during this mortal life, then its realisation in its fullness of freedom and beauty must be held in store for the souls of the blessed, as an incident in

*De Monarchia* iii. 16 and *passim*.



their path to heaven. It might not be that a divine thought and purpose for man, so tender and so tempered to his native powers, should be wholly cancelled and obliterated by the Fall—and forgotten in the Redemption.

All this is more than foreshadowed in the *De Monarchia*; and it is integral to the inmost structure and spirit of the Comedy; for the place which the Earthly Paradise occupies in Dante's poem has always been recognised as an outstanding feature in his conception of the after life. It is wholly without ecclesiastical authority and it determines the poet's bold and original conception of the site of Purgatory, not in the dismal purlieus of Hell, but on the sides of the mountain pedestal of Eden. The repentant souls climb it to recover the life of Innocence. In no merely allegorical sense did Virgil lead Dante to the Earthly Paradise, for it was he who had first taught him so to apprehend the ideals and ideal possibilities of the earthly life that he must perforce link them close to Heaven at the Summit of the mount of Purgation. Virgil was Beatrice's emissary and had brought him back to her.

So now the mists have cleared. The blurred divisions of the *Convivio* are superseded by the dominating contrasts and alliances between Revelation and Reason, the Eternal and the Temporal, the Church and the Empire; and the contrast between the civic and the speculative life, the statesmanship of a Frederick and the philosophic authority of an

*Convivio* iv. 6.

Aristotle, sinks into a subdivision of the domain of human reason. Above and beyond it rise the divine truths of Revelation.

One more step remains. The *De Monarchia* disintegrates without replacing the symbolism of the *Convivio*. It disintegrates it because its constructive ideas and contrasts break up the symbol of an undifferentiated Philosophy the theoretically higher aspect of which (the divine) is practically subordinated to the lower (the human). It does not replace it because it is itself entirely without symbolism. But the scheme symbolised in the Comedy, is already here in its completeness. Reason and Revelation are already the appointed guides. The only step that remains is to make Virgil and Beatrice their personified symbols. If we may trust the obvious indications of history and psychology, that step was taken under the terrible experience of hopes disappointed and prophetic fervours chilled that followed upon the disastrous failure of Henry's intervention in the affairs of Italy. To compare the great series of the *Political Letters* with the opening canto of the *Inferno*, and with such passages as the D V X cypher in the *Purgatorio*, or the close of Justinian's discourse in the *Paradiso*, is to find Dante's faith constant and unshaken, but his hopes and his affections turned wistfully to a vague and uncertain future. In the Comedy the Roman Empire is still the appointed organ of temporal government, and the political

*Purgatorio* xxxiii. 43.

*Paradiso* vi. 97 sqq.

Messiah who shall realise its ideal possibilities and secure the conditions of human blessedness upon earth is still to be looked for; but Henry came "ere Italy was ready to his hand," and the crown laid up for him in heaven was never firmly planted on his earthly brow. The vision of the Imperial Hound who shall chase the wolf of greed back to hell is a vision for many days. The corruption of the Church, the faithlessness of the Empire, and the discords between them have made havoc of earthly happiness, and obscured its prophecy of heavenly bliss. He who would escape from the tangled forest of the world as it is, must look for guidance and support elsewhere than to the official organs of Reason and Revelation. He must fall back upon the eternal principles themselves and be his own Emperor and Pope. Earthly blessedness, until the political Messiah comes, can only be found in the recovered Eden beyond the grave; and they who would hear by anticipation the harmonies of heaven amid the discords of earth must look into their own souls, must strengthen them by contemplation and support them by divine promises that cannot fail. To them the path of redemption is still open; and Reason and Revelation, though renounced and betrayed by those to whose guardianship they have been entrusted, are still at hand with their divine testimony for such as can hear their voice, and the poet braces himself to the task of

*Paradiso* xxx. 133 sqq. *Inferno* i. 101 sqq.

*Purgatorio* xxxii. 34—xxxiii. 12, and elsewhere.



“drawing them who are living the life on earth out of their misery and leading them to the state of bliss.”

When Dante fell back upon these inner lights and ideal hopes and found in them a deeper peace and the promise of a fuller and more divine fruition than his most ecstatic Messianic fervours had ever inspired, he recognised a note in this music of the soul which he had heard long since in the innocence of his childhood and early manhood, when beauty, truth and goodness had seemed to walk the earth incarnate in one whom many, without realising what they were saying, had called “the giver of blessing”—Beatrice. Many waters had flowed over Dante’s soul since then and had seemed almost to wash away that blessed and consecrated memory, for his very studies and expanding powers had seemed to lead him away from Beatrice. And so in a sense they had, for in their undisciplined violence they had full often led him astray. But now that he had at last found himself again, he once more found Beatrice, not as a distant memory, but as a living presence. That child, that maiden who had left the earthly life in the beauty of her early womanhood—she, more than all the saints—was his guide to the heavenly life of which her earthly presence had been the promise and the symbol.

But it was Virgil who had called him back to her; for it was he who, in the thought of the divine mission of the Empire, had opened to his vision at once the

meaning and the limitations of the earthly life, and in leading him to the Earthly Paradise had brought him into the presence of a guide whom he himself was forbidden to follow. Virgil brought Dante back to Beatrice. Then he vanished in silence from his side, but left in his heart a passionate protest, which heaven itself could but half silence, against the exclusion from heavenly bliss of the Pagan saints who seemed to fill the measure of human wisdom and goodness, and whose only defect was that they were ignorant of that which by their very nature and destiny they could not know.

\* \* \* \* \*

“What can the man do who cometh after the king?” —or what can we others say of him? Dante’s “Canonical” poets, so to speak, are Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan and Statius. Of these Horace need not detain us. Dante knew the *Ars Poetica* well, and repeatedly refers to it as an authority; but the only passage that seems to have touched his imagination is the beautiful analogy of falling leaves to the words that wither and fall out of use in our languages, to be succeeded by fresh and living growths. There is no clear evidence that Dante was acquainted at first hand with any other of the works of Horace, and

*Paradiso* xix. 22 sqq.; xxvi. 137 sq.  
*Ars Poetica* 60 sqq.



PLATE VII.—INFERNO, Cantos XXXII and XXXIII.

(*William Blake*)

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Juvenal, who is outside his Canon, seems to have touched him more to the quick.<sup>1</sup>

With the other three the case is very different. Each one of them is strongly felt in the Comedy with a specific influence of his own.

Statius is the only poet except Virgil who has a definitely symbolic significance and a considerable actual part in the action of the poem. He is a kind of Christianised Virgil, and it hardly seems fanciful to say that if Virgil stands for Philosophy unilluminated by revelation, though at its highest on its own ground, Statius stands for the Aristotelian side of the philosophy of the Christian Schoolmen. In his main discourse, on the nature of the intelligence, he refutes Averrhoes and gives precision to the teaching of Aristotle just at the point where natural philosophy most closely touches the boundary that separates it from Revelation. On this point, if I am right in my interpretation,

<sup>1</sup> Dante's references to Juvenal, and his quotations from him, are few, but significant. There is a note of passionate assent in his citation of *Sat.* viii. 6-32, in *Convivio* iv. 29: 37 sq. A few precious lines in the *Purgatorio* (xxii. 13-18) tell us that it was Juvenal, on his descent to Limbo, who first told Virgil how Statius loved and honoured him, and who thus woke in the master a reciprocal affection for the disciple. Juvenal's personality therefore is associated with one of the most moving incidents of the *Purgatorio*, and at the same time with the one glimpse that is allowed us of the life and converse of that great society of sages, heroes and poets in the Limbo. It may be noted, too, that Juvenal is the only contemporary author who mentions Statius, and he speaks of the *dulcedo* of his verse (vii: 82 sqq.). Hence doubtless Dante's description of Statius as *il dolce poeta* (*Conv.* iv. 25: 60) and his ascription to Statius himself of the words: "Tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirito."

*Purgatorio* xxi. 88, xxv. 61 sqq.

Dante would seem to imply that the Christian doctors alone are to be fully trusted as guides. Having a clear knowledge of the truths that human reason cannot reach, and having themselves expatiated in them, they can return to the lower range with energies braced to higher efficiency, and at the same time with a clearer sense of the limitation of the powers of reason. Combined courage and humility give firmness and security to their steps.

As a poet Statius had a marked influence upon Dante; but it is difficult to bring his verses into any direct connection with his symbolic character in the Comedy, except in the one point of his supposed secret conversion to Christianity. In a striking and beautiful passage in the *Thebaid* Statius describes an altar of refuge at Athens, dedicated to Clementia. There was no image or likeness of the deity there, and the crowd of suppliants that found asylum in the grove could only feel the divine influence in their hearts, and count themselves blessed by the protection of the "un-named altar." Little wonder that this passage should have been regarded as a cryptic reference to the altar dedicated to "the unknown God" which S. Paul saw at Athens! Was Statius, then, a Christian? Had he read the secret of Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, which Virgil himself had never understood? Had Virgil thus been the vehicle to him of the salvation he, Virgil, could give but could not receive? And had fear of persecution prevented him, Statius,

*Thebaid* xii. 481 sqq.



from openly avowing his faith? So Dante believed, and on that belief he based his gracious fiction that Statius had spent long centuries expiating his timidity on the terrace of the Laggards, and was overtaken by the pilgrim and his guide on the way to the Earthly Paradise, at the very moment when his release at last arrived. Few passages in the Comedy rival the tender beauty and pathos of the lines in which Statius meets Virgil and tells him how it was from him that he received the gift of salvation which the loved giver himself might never share—like one who paces through the night bearing a light behind him that shines on the path of another, but not upon his own.

It may be noted, in passing, that Dante's description of the Mount of Purgatory itself owes more than a hint to Statius.

The real Statius is amazingly unequal in his poems. Extravagance and sentimental absurdity, coupled with a want of poetic taste that will allow him to speak—in a really fine passage too—of a mountain being so lofty that no birds can reach its summit, and it only serves for the stars to sit down upon when they are tired, alternate or intertwine with strains of gloomy splendour and images of true beauty and tenderness. Dante appears to have been insensible to his defects, but, on the other hand, it is startling to find how many outstanding passages, chiefly in the *Inferno*, are founded upon hints caught

from his poems. A few examples must suffice. The splendid description of the Angel that crosses the Styx to rebuke the fiends who would close the city of Dis to Dante and Virgil is taken—but “with a difference” that makes it what it is—from a similar description by Statius of Mercury carrying a divine mandate to the infernal regions. The removal of Achilles from the care of Chiron was known to Dante from Statius. It was from the same source that he drew his conception of the blasphemer Capaneus. It was a line in Statius that brought the cleft flame that swathed Ulysses and Diomedes before Dante’s pregnant gaze; and lastly, it was from the merely loathsome scene in Statius, where in bestial rage the dying Tydeus gnaws the head of Melanippus, that Dante drew that deathless picture of Ugolino and Ruggiero, in which blended horror and tenderness seem to speak their last word.

It will have been observed that though the symbolic significance of Statius in Dante’s poem is based on an intellectual and philosophical conception, his poetic influence betrays itself entirely on the imaginative side. It is far otherwise with Lucan, who profoundly affects Dante’s personal estimates, and obviously helps to guide and develop, if he does not actually form, some of his characteristic poetic habits. The influence of

*Inferno* ix. 82 sqq. *Thebaid* ii. 1 sq. *Purgatorio* ix. 34–39. *Achilleid* i. 247 sqq.

*Inferno* xiv. 46 sqq. *Thebaid* iii. 660 sq.; x. 904 sqq.

*Inferno* xxvi. 52 sqq. *Thebaid* i. 33 sq.; xii. 429 sqq.

*Inferno* xxxii. 124 sqq. *Thebaid* viii. 739 sqq.

Lucan, taken in the broad, is far less incidental and detached than is that of Statius. Thus his conception of Cato and the place he occupies in the spiritual economy of the after life, though it has many contributory sources, is founded in the main on the representations of Lucan. Even the description of his personal appearance is closely modelled on Lucan's. This is the more noteworthy because there are so many reasons why Cato should *not* be the guardian spirit who receives the souls on the island basis of Purgatory. He was a Pagan. He was a suicide. He was the arch opponent of Cæsar, who stands on the temporal plane as the earthly analogue of Christ in the spiritual order, so that Brutus and Cassius share the fate of Judas. Cato, it is true, was no traitor, but he was the determined opponent of the prime representative of the Roman Empire, which in its turn is the antitype of that very life of Eden which the repentant spirits seek. How then can Cato, of all men, be the shepherd of this pilgrim flock? The answer to these questions has never been given in detail with any convincing force; but for our present purpose it is enough to treat them as difficulties that Dante overcame or ignored, and to ask what urged him to go apparently out of his way to encounter them by choosing Cato for this office. What was the *force majeure* which made Cato inevitable? To this question Lucan, more than any other, gives the answer. The keynote of the *Purgatorio* is ethical,

*Purgatorio* i. 34 sqq. *Pharsalia* ii. 372 sqq.



not mystic. Justice is the foundation of all virtue. Neither justice nor any true virtue is possible without freedom. No man who is a slave of his pleasures is free. It is this moral liberty that the repentant souls are seeking to recover. And Cato stands alone as the one man who had realised the Stoic ideal of this perfect freedom. For him, as Lucan testifies, "no pleasure had any say on its own account," and even his most intimate personal relations were regarded by him primarily in their social and civic aspects. So to Dante he was inevitably the appropriate guardian of the Mount. His opposition to Cæsar must be regarded as a defence of freedom, not as an opposition to law and order; and his very suicide must be understood allegorically as the delivery of the spirit from the tyranny of the flesh.

But Lucan, in his own person, has no feeling at all for the idealising of the Empire, or for Cæsar as its representative. He hates the Empire, and though he cannot restrain a certain admiration for the firmness and rapidity of Cæsar's dauntless advance to his goal, yet he uniformly represents it as a kind of dæmonic energy that worked with baleful force against all better influences; and it can hardly be denied that whereas Lucan in no way affects Dante's estimate of the mission of Rome, he does very notably affect his representations of Cæsar. Dante borrows

*Pharsalia* ii. 387 sq. (where Henry Fielding—in *Amelia*—and Lord Macaulay are surely right, as against the grammarians, in taking the dative in *urbi pater est* not as *pro genitivo*, but as the dative of "interest" or "advantage").

more than one touch from Lucan in his personal references to Cæsar, and the result is an absence of warmth in them, to say the least, which we should hardly have anticipated. They strike us as almost unfriendly.

For the rest, note Lucan's description of how Pompey, springing from his neglected and but half-burned ashes, and seeking the ethereal abode of heroic spirits, "when he had gathered his soul to the eternal orbs and filled himself with very light, looking down upon the wandering planets and the stars that hold fixed places on the pole, perceived how deep the darkness under which what we call light abides, and smiled at the insults offered to his lifeless trunk." Here, and so far as I can remember here alone amongst the ancient poets known to Dante, we catch something akin to the "note" of the *Paradiso*. Dante is able to quote him, too, as supplying an Ethnic scripture to confirm the belief in the omnipresence of God. It is the wonderful passage in which Lucan summarises the Stoic creed at its highest, and (anticipating almost the very words of Wordsworth, though not his passion) declares: "The seat of God is there where earth and sea and air and virtue are. Why do we seek the Gods beyond? Whatever you see, wherever you go, is Jupiter."

I can only touch upon the obvious influence of Lucan on those elaborate astronomical circum-

*Pharsalia* ix. 1-14. *Paradiso* xxii. 133 sqq. *Pharsalia* ix. 578 sqq. *Epist. ad Kan. Grand.* 22 (412-426).

locutions that are a weariness of the flesh to most readers of the Comedy, but are so full of poetic beauty to the "other few" who have mastered the alphabet and grammar of the speech. The hint for the striking scene in which Dante is bewildered by the astronomical appearances of the southern hemisphere is found in a line in which Lucan represents certain soldiers in Pompey's army, supposed to have come from below the Line, as "marvelling not to see the shadows go round to the left"—*i.e.* not travel counter clockwise, as they do in the southern hemisphere. All the elaborate synchronisms of the Comedy spring from this root. And lastly Dante's eye for great tracts of country marked out by their river basins or mountain ridges, and his interest in the life history of a stream may have been trained, and must certainly have been delighted, by the fine though less perfect passages in Lucan which they recall.

Ovid remains. We note, without surprise, that his love-poetry, which had such enormous influence on the French poets of the twelfth century, appears to have left Dante altogether cold. And though on other grounds he would seem superficially to owe more to him than to all the other poets except Virgil put together, yet his direct influence seldom if ever goes deep. He gave him a vast store of illustrations and associations; but the scenes and incidents that

*Pharsalia* iv. 56 sqq.; viii. 467 sqq. *Paradiso* xxix. 1 sqq.; x. 28 sqq. *Pharsalia* i. 651 sqq. *Canzone*, "Io son venuto."  
*Pharsalia* iii. 247 sqq.; ix. 537. *Purgatorio* iv. 82 and *passim*.  
*Pharsalia* i. 399 sqq. *Inferno* xvi. 97 sqq.





PLATE VIII.—PURGATORIO, Canto XXIX.

(*William Blake*)

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Ovid presented to Dante, Dante saw with his own eyes, not Ovid's. He placed them in his own context and inspired them with his own imagination or passion. Nowhere more markedly than here is the principle illustrated that the thing that matters most in a builder is not where he got his stones, but where he put them. Ovid is indeed a quarry, but Dante is his own architect. The ghastliness of Hell is heightened by the reference to Narcissus as much as the tenderness of Purgatory is deepened by that to Pyramus, or the scarce supportable glory of heaven brought home by that to Semele. Ovid's stories constantly enrich Dante's imagery, geographical or natural. As we watch for the sunrise, we are awaiting the first point of "the chariot pole that Phæton erst misguided"; as we look from aloft upon the Levant, it is the coast on which "Europa made herself a sweet burden" (the phrase is supplied by Statius—*Blanda juvenci Pondera*—but the tale is Ovid's), and in the description of a double rainbow, when Echo is called in as an illustration, she is "the wandering nymph whom love consumed as doth the sun the vapours," but nowhere that I can recall is Dante really stirred by Ovid's presentation of his matter as distinct from the mere telling of the tale. It is the situation, and no more, that Ovid supplies. Nor is this strange. For Ovid, in his treatment of his subjects, is often tenderly human, especially—and perhaps unexpectedly—in his depicting of matrimonial love, faithful to the end.

*Thebaid* i: 181 sq.



The story of Baucis and Philemon does not stand alone. But this same Ovid has carried to its extremest limit the art of robbing mythology of any trace of mystery or reminiscent significance, and of bleaching every suggestion of awe out of legends of the Gods. And the strange thing is that Dante seems to be quite unaware of this weakness. When Ovid gives him a situation he sees its possibilities so inevitably that he thinks Ovid saw them too and even that he has already developed them for him. Thus he refers to the story of Argus lulled to sleep by Mercury, who is telling him the tale of Syrinx, as though Ovid had carried as far as human power can take it the vain attempt to depict the very act of dropping asleep, which in its nature cannot be made to sit for its portrait. He seems to be unconscious of the fact that he has himself performed that miracle in an earlier canto with touches for which Ovid's finest brush would be no better than a besom. Yet more striking is it that he refers his reader to Ovid, where he, Dante, is himself helpless. It is when he is trying to describe the "passing beyond humanity" of the soul caught into the atmosphere of heaven. Such an experience cannot be expressed in human speech, but it was like that of Glaucus in Ovid's story. The reader turns to that story of the fisherman who, by tasting the magic herb that had re-animated the expiring fishes he had

*Purgatorio* xxxii. 64-69. *Metamorphoses* i. 685-714.

*Purgatorio* xviii. 139-145.

*Paradiso* i. 67-72.

caught and enabled them to leap back into the sea, is himself inwardly transformed into divine kinship with the ocean, and plunges into its depth, no longer a man but a deity. But reading the story in Ovid does but show us how infallibly Ovid misses the spiritual suggestions of his material, and how instinctively Dante feels them.

It would be ungracious to close on a note of depreciation. Ovid never pretends to more than he attains, and he attains much. If Dante saw more in him than was really there, it is our gain. To all students of the Comedy the *Metamorphoses*, charming in themselves, have a special added charm thrown back upon them by that further "metamorphosis" which they themselves owe to Dante.

*Metamorphoses* xiii. 920 sqq.





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# DANTE AND THE TROUBADOURS

A. G. FERRERS HOWELL.

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## DANTE AND THE TROUBADOURS

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IN studying the works of Dante, especially the *Vita Nuova* and the lyrical poems in general, we cannot fail to be struck by the evident influence of the troubadours upon him; and not only by their influence, but by the equally notable contrast between their view of life and his. It may, therefore, not be unprofitable to attempt to establish the relation between them. But before entering on this attempt it will be well to set forth briefly the nature of the love which was the predominant theme of the troubadours' poetry at its most brilliant period, the latter half of the twelfth century, when it was being enthusiastically cultivated at the courts of the sovereigns and the nobles of greater or lesser degree in the south of France and the north-east of Spain.<sup>1</sup> For the illustration of the nature of this love I shall rely chiefly on the authority of its most celebrated and gifted votary, Bernart de Ventadorn, from whose *chansos* the whole lore of chivalrous love in its most splendid development may be gathered. "No other of the prominent troubadours," it has been well said, "is so singly and exclusively a poet of love; without a thought of the business of this world, or the claims

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, i. 8 : 42-44; ii. 12 : 20, 21.



of another ; without a word of politics, morality, or piety in his whole works.”<sup>1</sup>

The love extolled by the troubadours of the early and middle periods—say, from 1100 to 1209—however sometimes disguised by high-flown language, was the love founded on sexual passion. This is made plain by the nature of the reward that the lover looked for at his mistress’s hand. This reward might vary in its degree according to the greater or lesser intimacy or opportunity in the particular case ; but it was always of the same kind. “ I languish in grievous distress,” cries Bernart, “ for the sake of her whom Beauty willed to fashion ; for her body is formed of the best that Nature could select ; her hips are slender and graceful ; her face appears fresh as a rose, wherewith she might easily revive me if I were dead. Shall I tell you how ? I am not bold enough. . . . When I see her go away from me, so great is the chill that I am undone, for the fire coming from her which is wont to warm me flies, and I remain colourless. . . . High is the reward vouchsafed me in that she but deigned to greet me. Much thanks ! God protect her for it. Lady, if you would listen to me with that same tenderness with which I am speaking, we would at the beginning of our love make an exchange of our souls. Then a delightful consciousness would be mine, for I should forthwith understand how it is with you, and you,

<sup>1</sup> C. Appel, *Bernart von Ventadorn*, p. lxxi (Halle, 1915). This work contains Bernart’s complete poems, with facsimile reproductions of twenty-three of their melodies.

how it is with me, in perfect unanimity, and our two hearts would be joined in one.”<sup>1</sup>

Again : “ And since you were pleased to do me such honour the day that with a kiss you gave me your love, contrive, if it please you, that still more [than a kiss] may be mine.”<sup>2</sup> And this is amplified in the most explicit language in other passages.<sup>3</sup> A poem by Peire Rogier, a contemporary of Bernart, also throws light on the point we are considering. He begins by professing that such is his mistress’s excellence, that the most ill-conditioned churl, did he but speak a word or two with her, would become courteous ; next, after expressing his utter devotion to her service, and congratulating himself on his sagacity in choosing such an object for his homage, he bewails the misery he endures in her absence, and in his failure to win her favour. Finally his aim is disclosed, namely, that he may “ enjoy her.”<sup>4</sup>

This love was the troubadour’s supreme good. “ Through nothing,” says Bernart, “ is a man so excellent as through love and gallantry ; for from hence proceed gaiety and song, and all that chivalry implies. Wherefore I would not have the lordship of all the world unless I could secure the rapture of

<sup>1</sup> *Can lo boschatges es floritz*, ll. 25 ff. (Appel, No. 40).

<sup>2</sup> *Bem cuidei de chantar sofrir*, st. ii. (Appel, No. 13). Cf. *Can la frej’aura* (al. *douss’aura*) *venta*, st. v. (Appel, No. 37).

<sup>3</sup> *Pos preyatx me Senhor*, st. iv. (Appel, No. 36). *Lonc tems a qu’eu no chantei mai*, st. v., vi. (Appel, No. 27).

<sup>4</sup> *Ges non puesc en bon vers faillir*. Appel, *Das Leben u. die Lieder des Troubadors Peire Rogier*, pp. 54-57 (Berlin, 1882).

love.”<sup>1</sup> Here we have in a nutshell the troubadours’ philosophy of life.

In the Court circles of those days the young girl was kept completely in the background, and the troubadours invariably paid their homage to some married lady of high station; and when we remember that there were some 460 troubadours of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries whose poems have survived, we may be sure that there was a good deal of “common form” and simulated passion in their songs. But Appel explodes the extravagant thesis maintained by some, that nearly all the troubadours’ love-songs were mere poetic exercises without any emotional foundation, and that the ladies celebrated in them were “purely imaginary phantoms.”<sup>2</sup>

The south of France in the twelfth century was a comparatively peaceful region, and the courtly society there led a cultivated, gay, frivolous existence which has been vividly depicted in the charming poem of *Flamenca*.<sup>3</sup> It was a non-moral, if not an immoral world, and though sacred names often occur in the troubadours’ poems, they are seldom met with save as expletives or adjurations. The most remarkable example of this is found in the famous *Alba* of Giraut de Bornelh, which begins with a magnificent invocation of God, that He may be pleased to protect the person of the singer’s companion, who is passing the

<sup>1</sup> *Ges de chantar nom pren talans*, ll. 25–30 (Appel, No. 21).

<sup>2</sup> *Bernart von Ventadorn*, xxiv. ff.

<sup>3</sup> P. Meyer, *Le roman de Flamenca* (Paris, 1901).



night with his mistress.<sup>1</sup> In something of the same spirit we find B. de Ventadorn thus enjoining unselfishness from a selfish motive : " For her sake it is right and seemly that I should serve every creature : even my enemy I ought to call my lord ; for by fair speech you may win over even him who is most opposed to love to further the lover's interest." <sup>2</sup>

In connection with this subject we may briefly refer to the troubadour known as the Monk of Montaudon, who, after delighting the courts of the nobility around with his minstrelsy, and enriching his monastery with the presents he received, obtained permission to visit Alfonso II, King of Aragon (1162-1196). This monarch " commanded him to eat flesh and pay court to the ladies, and sing, and compose poetry ; and this he did." We possess, in fact, some twenty pieces by him—love-songs and other poems.<sup>3</sup>

When, however, we come to the troubadours of the thirteenth century, we see that the treatment of the theme of chivalrous love has undergone a transformation. The later poems of Giraut de Bornelh (fl. 1170?-1220?) clearly indicate the beginning of the transition from the old chivalry to the new. The peculiar social conditions amid which the earlier troubadours had sung in the courts of the princes and nobles of southern France had been swept away by

<sup>1</sup> A. Kolsen, *Sämtliche Lieder des Trobadors Giraut de Bornelh*, No. 54 (Halle, 1907). See below, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Bem cuidei de cantar sofrir*, ll. 41-45 (Appel, No. 13).

<sup>3</sup> Published in E. Philippson, *Der Mönch von Montaudon* (Halle, 1872).

the Albigenian War, which had raged intermittently from 1209 till 1229; and, partly in consequence of this, partly in consequence of the action of the Inquisition and of the preaching of the Friars, the spiritual and moral elements began to prevail over the carnal in the love-lyrics of the later troubadours, whose most meritorious compositions indeed were not love-songs (*chansos*), but pieces on political, moral, or personal topics (*sirventes*). Take, for example, the troubadour Bertran d'Alamanon, who flourished at the court of the Count of Provence under Raymond Berenger IV (*d.* 1245) and his successor, Charles of Anjou. Of the twenty-one poems of his which we possess, three only are love-songs, and in one of them an entirely fresh note is sounded. The love-lorn poet laments that his mistress will not attend to him because of her absorption in her religious duties!<sup>1</sup> His contemporary, G. Montanhagol (*d.* about 1258), expresses the newer doctrine of love in very plain terms: "Truly," he says, "lovers should give willing service to love; for love is not sin, but contrariwise a virtue which makes the wicked good, and the good better, and sets men in the road to act well day by day. Moreover, love is the source of chastity, for he who realises what love is cannot afterwards conduct himself ill."<sup>2</sup> And Aimeric de Pegulhan says, in the course of an elaborate apology for love, that without her (*i. e.* love) he can

<sup>1</sup> *Nuls hom non deu eser meraveilaz*, st. i. Salverda de Grave, *Le Troubadour Bertran d'Alamanon*, No. XX. (Toulouse, 1902).

<sup>2</sup> *Ar ab lo coinde pascor*, ll. 11 ff. Coulet, *Le Troubadour Guilhem Montanhagol*, No. II. (Toulouse, 1898).

have no honour, and that many times she keeps him from baseness from which he could not keep himself otherwise.<sup>1</sup> The feeling expressed by this and other of the later troubadours, that love needed any apology, shows the strength of the reaction in favour of religion and morality that had set in; and it would have moved Bernart de Ventadorn to incredulous contempt. A comparison of this poem with the two *chansos* of Bernart cited above (p. 193, note 3) is instructive. We shall see Dante under the influence of both these opposite doctrines of love.

The later troubadours continued to employ all the old formulas of their predecessors' love-songs; and their attempt to adapt them to the new conception of love inevitably led to affectation and conventionality. Morality gained at the expense of poetry: and the early Italians who, if we may use the expression, took over the stock-in-trade of the late Provençals, found themselves entangled in the "knot" from which it required all the subtlety of Guido Guinizelli and the other poets of the *dolce stil nuovo* to deliver them.<sup>2</sup>

The pastime of chivalrous love was carried on under certain well-understood rules and conventions. The first and most important was, that the identity of the object of the poet's love and homage should not be disclosed, under the stress of whatsoever temptation. This is very clearly explained by B. de Ventadorn:

<sup>1</sup> *Selh que s'irais ni guerrey' ab amor*, st. iv. Monaci, *Testi antichi provenzali*, col. 60 (Rome, 1889).

<sup>2</sup> *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 49 ff.



"So much does the ecstasy of love overpower and conquer me that it is a marvel how I can endure not to tell and declare on account of whom I am so joyful and exultant. But scarce will you see any true love free from apprehension and misgiving; for a man is always fearful of failing in his duty to his beloved; wherefore I dare not be bold to speak. As to one point, my understanding helps me; namely, that no one ever questioned me concerning my joy without my readily lying to him about it: for it does not appear to me to be sound sense, but rather childish folly, for one that is happy in love to disclose his heart to another unless he can thereby be of service to him. There is no discourtesy (*enois*) nor transgression greater than that of him who spies upon another's love."<sup>1</sup> Hence, in the troubadours' lyrics the poet's mistress is designated by some fanciful nickname, such as *Aziman* (magnet), *Conort* (consolation).<sup>2</sup> The secret was doubtless often an open secret, but so far as poetry was concerned it was always kept. The reason for this rule was, of course, the damage that might be caused to the reputation of the lovers by the envy of slanderers and backbiters. Bernart accordingly protests to his lady: "If those false envious ones who have robbed me of many a good day should set themselves in ambush to discover how things stand between us, be not dismayed by the talk of base scoundrels,

<sup>1</sup> *Ab joi mou lo vers el comens*, ll. 9-30 (Appel, No. 1).

<sup>2</sup> The poets' patrons and men friends are also often referred to in the same way.

for our love shall not be known through me ; be well assured of that.”<sup>1</sup>

Next, the lover must be devoted and constant to the service of his mistress : “ I will always wish her honour and her good, and will be to her a vassal, a friend, and a servant.”<sup>2</sup> “ Among lovers,” says G. de Bornelh,<sup>3</sup> “ the highest praise is secrecy and constancy. Let him be blotted out from among the faithful, and let him renounce the best that love has to give, who follows not her rule and law, but associates himself with many, so that *one* is of no concern to him.”

Absolute submission to the desires, and even the whims of the lady were enjoined : “ I welcome her love which takes me captive for *her* sake, though she makes me a hard prison, for she is always reproaching me for that which *I* have cause to complain of. She is wrong ; but I forgive her, for I know her to be so fair and good that all ills from her are good to me.”<sup>4</sup> Still, if the mistress remained persistently obdurate, or betrayed her lover, he was not doomed to languish in perpetual desolation, but was free to turn his attention elsewhere. “ I had served her very well,” says Bernart, “ until her heart was fickle toward me : but since she is not destined for me, I am very foolish if I serve her any more.”<sup>5</sup> Most of the troubadours, in fact, wor-

<sup>1</sup> *A ! tantas bonas chansos*, st. vi. (Appel, No. 8).

<sup>2</sup> *Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn*, st. iv. (Appel, No. 12).

<sup>3</sup> *Qui chantar sol*, st. vi. (Kolsen, No. 44).

<sup>4</sup> B. de Ventadorn, *Bel mes can eu vei la brolha*, st. iii. (Appel, No. 9).

<sup>5</sup> *La dousa voiz ai auzida*, ll. 32-36 (Appel, No. 23).

shipped at different altars at different times, and would have yielded a hearty assent to the comfortable doctrine, "*amorem huius posse torpescere atque denique interire, nec non huius . . . in anima reformari.*"<sup>1</sup>

Some troubadours adopted an obscure and subtle style of composition (*trobar clus*, or *sotil*) characterised by unusual words and constructions, rare rhymes and every metrical artifice that their ingenuity could suggest. The supreme master in this style was Dante's favourite, Arnaut Daniel, whom I shall discuss later. The motives leading to the adoption of the obscure style were two: first, a striving after originality, which, naturally, became harder and harder to attain as time went on. Peire d'Alvernhe, a noted artist in the *trobar clus* (whom Dante mentions in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, i. 10), whose muse was evidently somewhat intractable, sets forth his difficulty quite frankly at the beginning of one of his poems. "I will sing," says he, "since I see I must, a new song which is buzzing in my mouth. I have been sore puzzled how I might sing in such wise that my song should not resemble any one else's; for no song was ever worth anything if it resembled those of other people."<sup>2</sup> The second motive was a practical one, namely, the desire to guard against the danger of the words being tampered with in performance, by making them as difficult as possible. This appears from another quotation

<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Epistola*, iii., § 2 (ed. Paget Toynbee, p. 23).

<sup>2</sup> *Chantarei pus vei qu'a far m'er*, st. i., in Zenker, *Die Lieder Peires von Auvergne*, No. V. (Erlangen, 1900).



from Peire d'Alvernhe: "It is pleasing and agreeable to me when any one applies himself to sing in close and guarded words which people are afraid to misquote."<sup>1</sup>

We now open the *Vita Nuova*. We begin with the narrative of the first appearance to Dante of "the glorious lady of his mind," and the origin of that love for his ideal mistress, to whom, in spite of much stumbling, falling, and backsliding, he remained constant until his life's end. Here we find delineated the dawn of a genuine passion, free alike from the carnal taint of the earlier troubadours and from the frigid conventionality of the later. From the outset, the rule of secrecy is so effectually kept that the first sentence in which the name Beatrice occurs has proved one of the most puzzling places in the whole book.

We turn the page and find that the poet's devotion to his mistress has entered on a new phase: it is brought within the domain of the conventions of chivalrous love. The poetry of the troubadours, as Appel points out,<sup>2</sup> was social poetry. The troubadour did not pour out his soul in the solitude of his own chamber, but brought his emotions into the common stock, and performed his composition, or had it performed, in public. Dante accordingly makes his passion a subject of literary discussion, and comes before "all the faithful people of love," proposing to them in a

<sup>1</sup> Zenker, *op. cit.*, No. XIV., st. i. (*Be mes plazen*).

<sup>2</sup> *Bernart von Ventadorn*, p. lx.

sonnet a dream of which he solicits the interpretation. Many answers were returned, and he notes that the true meaning was hidden from all, "though now," he adds, "it is plain even to the simplest." The dream, in fact, contained a forecast of the issue of the poet's love. We are reminded of Giraut de Bornelh's dream which he related to his friend, who interpreted it as a prediction that Giraut would enjoy the love of a mistress of exalted rank.<sup>1</sup>

The incidents of the two "screen-ladies," with their attendant circumstances, further illustrate the maintenance of the rule of secrecy; but as regards the second lady, Dante confesses himself to have been guilty of a grave transgression of chivalrous convention in having given occasion for scandalous gossip concerning her. This coming to his lady's ears, she, the foe of every violation of the conventions of chivalrous love (*contraria di tutte le noie*), fearing that Dante had become even as one of the *enoios* so often girded at by the troubadours, refused to greet him; which greeting had been wont to fill him with such bliss that he could scarce endure it. Then, in accordance with the rules of the pastime, Dante sat down to compose an exculpatory poem, such as the troubadours denominated *escondig*. Dante's *escondig* takes the form of a *ballata*; he has not yet that assured mastery of style to which he afterwards attained, and there is a certain laboured affectation about the piece, which lacks the simple grace and elegance of the poem which

<sup>1</sup> *No pòsc sofrir c'a la dolor* (Kolsen, No. 40).

the troubadour Pons de Capduoill composed on some similar occasion.<sup>1</sup> There is one interesting point about this *ballata*. It must not be forgotten that the music was an essential part alike of Provençal and of Italian lyrics;<sup>2</sup> and Dante seems to intimate (*Vita Nuova* xii.) that he employed a professional minstrel to set his *ballata* to music. This was the practice of such troubadours, Bertran de Born, for example, as were not themselves musicians: whether it was Dante's usual procedure, we do not know. He was devotedly fond of music, as the most cursory perusal of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* shows, and *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 10 implies that he possessed a theoretical knowledge of it; but there is nothing in his writings, so far as I know, to lead us to suppose that he was a composer and a performer himself.

The next division of the *Vita Nuova* marks a pause in the poet's development. In the four sonnets it contains he is entirely self-centred, and they set forth the painful conflict he endured before he could resolve to renounce the wooing of his mistress in the troubadour manner, and to devote himself thenceforth to singing her praises without the thought of winning anything from her in return. From the point of view of Dante's progress as a lyric poet, this portion of the *Vita Nuova* would seem to adumbrate the period of

<sup>1</sup> *S'ieu fis ni dis nulla saisso*, in Von Napolski, *Leben und Werke des Trobadors Pons de Capduoill*, No. VIII. (Halle, 1879).

<sup>2</sup> See *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 8; and Beck, *La musique des Troubadours* (Paris, H. Laurens).



gestation and travail which preceded the great transformation set forth in § xix. when he had accomplished the passage from the Provençal, or chivalrous, to the Guinizellian, or philosophic conception of love, and *fuore trasse le nuove rime cominciando ; Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore*. He says, it is true, concerning the beginning of this *canzone*, "*la mia lingua parlò quasi come per sè stessa mossa*"; but it cannot be that such a momentous change in his whole view of love as we see in comparing this *canzone* with the preceding poems was not the result of prolonged study and meditation during which he had found himself *in amorosa erranza*.<sup>1</sup> The Provençal setting of the earlier part of the *Vita Nuova* is now cast aside as inapplicable and outworn, and the poet, in the exquisite lyrics which follow, soars to heights of philosophic mysticism far beyond the troubadours' ken. Frequent verbal reminiscences of the troubadours, however, still occur, to attest the strong grip they held on Dante's mind, but though his language may seem at times to be but a reflection of theirs, it is animated by a new spirit and a deeper meaning.<sup>2</sup> We may perhaps except the dirge (or *planh*, to use the Provençal term) which as a good troubadour Dante composed on his lady's death : I mean the *canzone* "*Gli occhi dolenti*."<sup>3</sup> This may well be compared with Pons de Capduoill's *planh* on the death of his

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Nuova*, sonnet vi.

<sup>2</sup> These parallels are worked out in detail in Scherillo's excellent edition of the *Vita Nuova* (Milan, 1911).

<sup>3</sup> *Vita Nuova*, § xxxii.

lady, Azalais de Mercœur.<sup>1</sup> The tone and sentiments of the two poets are very similar: each dwells upon the abiding of his lady with the angels in heaven; but while Pons bewails the loss which the whole world has sustained, not less than his own distress, Dante seems more absorbed in his personal desolation, sharing his grief only with those sympathetic *donne e donzelle* to whom the poem is addressed.

In the MS. song-books wherein the troubadours' poems are preserved, some of the poems<sup>2</sup> are preceded by explanatory prose narratives, much later in date, called *razos*. Observing that Dante in three passages of the *Vita Nuova*<sup>3</sup> refers to the prose narrative as *ragione*, some have thought that the composition of this narrative may have been suggested to him by the Provençal *razos*; but it is equally likely that the *razos* in Boëthius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, to the study of which Dante tells us that he applied himself for comfort after Beatrice's death,<sup>4</sup> may have given the suggestion.

We now turn from the *Vita Nuova* to consider Dante's relation to the troubadour whom he seems to honour and admire above all others—I mean Arnaut Daniel. Arnaut is referred to four times in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, first (ii. 2: 80) as the typical Provençal singer of love, next (ii. 6: 60) as a master of style,

<sup>1</sup> *De totz chaitius son eu aïcel que plus*, Napolski, *op. cit.*, No. XXIV.

<sup>2</sup> About seventy in number. Chabaneau, *Les Biographies des Troubadours*, p. 2 (Toulouse, 1885).

<sup>3</sup> xxxvi., xxxviii., xl.

<sup>4</sup> *Convivio* ii. 13: 15.

and again (ii. 10 and ii. 13) as an authority on the technique of the *canzone*; while in *Purgatorio* xxvi. 117-119 he is preferred before even Guido Guinizelli as "a better craftsman of the mother-tongue"; and is declared to have surpassed "all verses of love and proses of romances"—a much-discussed phrase, the meaning of which probably is, that in respect of technical skill Arnaut surpassed all writers both in southern and in northern France.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting, therefore, to try to discover on what foundation Dante's opinion of him is based. As material for this inquiry we possess only eighteen poems by Arnaut,<sup>2</sup> one of which may be left out of account, since it is merely a very coarse satirical piece, and without metrical interest, being composed of simple mono-rhymed stanzas. It is probably an early production, and to be taken more or less as a joke, but it may account for Dante's choice of the particular group of sinners among whom to place Arnaut in Purgatory. The other seventeen poems are all *chansos*, and as a specimen of Arnaut's handling of his theme I give a literal version of one of them <sup>3</sup> (omitting the *tornada*), which presents less formidable difficulties to the translator than most of the others.

I. Before the tips of the branches are left dry and

<sup>1</sup> See Paget Toynbee, *Dante Studies and Researches*, 7, n. 2, 262; and Torraca, in *Bullettino della Società Dantesca Italiana*, N. S., xii. 336.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Canello, *La vita e le opere del trovatore Arnaldo Daniello* (Halle, 1883), a work to which I am much indebted.

<sup>3</sup> *Ans quel cim reston de branchas* (Canello, No. 16).



stript of leaves, I will sing, for Love so bids me, a brief song on an ample theme. For Love has instructed me graciously in the arts of her school; so much know I that I stop the stream flowing against me, and my ox is much swifter than a hare.<sup>1</sup>

2. With pleasing, friendly discourse Love has bid me not depart from her [*i. e.* his lady], nor serve nor woo another, since she does me such a favour as to welcome me to her; and Love tells me that I am not to seem to her a violet which soon withers though winter be not yet come, but rather that for her sake I should be a bay-tree or juniper.

3. Love said: "Thou who tarriest not elsewhere for another who may deign to desire thee, do thou avoid and reject any intrigue in any place, whoever may invite thee. He who maims himself does himself great harm; but do thou make no mistake which may lead men to mock thee; and next after God, do thou honour and celebrate her.

4. "And thou, faint-hearted one, be not dismayed for fear she may not love thee: pursue, if she flies thee or avoids thee; for he who persists in his entreaties and does not leave off can scarce fail to attain his end. For I [to gain such a lady] would pass amid the marsh of Lerna as a pilgrim, or yonder through the land where Hebrus flows."

5. If I have crossed rivers and torrents for her,

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to his having said in a former poem, in reference to his then hopeless love, that he was "hunting the hare with an ox and swimming against the stream."

think you that I repent it? Not I; for with Love's joy alone, without other food, she can make me the sweet medicine of her embrace and kisses; and my heart, e'en though it flies, parts not from her who guides and governs it. Heart, whithersoever I go, leave her not, nor sever thyself from her!

6. From Nile to Sanehas<sup>1</sup> no fairer lady clothes and unclothes herself; for so great is her beauty that the report of it would seem to you a lie. Prosperous am I in love since she kisses and embraces me; cold nor frost nor fog chills me, nor does gout nor fever hurt me!

I may note that the far-fetched reference to the Hebrus in Thrace, and the rather prosaic mention of gout and fever (*gota ni febres*), are due to the rare rhyme in *ebres* which occurs in the last line of every stanza. Similarly the rhyme in *erna* may account for the allusion to the Lernean marsh.

The mention in this *chanço* of kissing and embracing, and other still more ardent expressions elsewhere, leave no room for doubt as to the carnal nature of the love that is the theme of Arnaut's song; and this seems to supply the clue to the meaning of Dante's eulogy of him in the passage of the *Purgatorio* already referred to. On account of the love which he had celebrated—or, rather, the abuse of it—he is represented as undergoing the purgatorial discipline; but at the same time Dante speaks of his poetic achievement in

<sup>1</sup> Locality and reading doubtful.

the language already quoted. It seems therefore to follow, that the eulogy applies not to the subject-matter of his poetry, which Dante is there condemning, but to his treatment of it—in other words, to his supreme technical skill. Therefore no disparagement can be intended of *quel di Lemosì* (G. de Bornelh), except only in respect of technique;<sup>1</sup> and this harmonises perfectly with *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2, where Giraut is associated with Dante and “his friend” Cino of Pistoia as a singer of *virtus*, *rectitudo*, and *directio voluntatis*, whereas Arnaut appears as the singer of *Venus*, *accensio amoris*, and *amor*, which, I take it, must here be limited to carnal affection. Dante’s praise of Arnaut attests the great importance he attached to technical skill in poetry. He saw that, since G. Guinizelli had infused a new spirit into the infant vernacular poetry hidebound by worn-out Provençal tradition, the one thing needful was to complete the formation of a literary language which should be a fit vehicle for the expression of the new philosophy of love; and to this task he devoted himself both by precept in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and by example in his own lyrical compositions.

As regards metrical technique, Dante mentions a device which is very characteristic of A. Daniel.<sup>2</sup> The practice of leaving one or more “isolated”

<sup>1</sup> Note that the speech of Limoges was held to be the best of all for *chansos* and *sirventes* (Raimon Vidal, *Las razos de trobar* in Monaci, *op. cit.*, 5).

<sup>2</sup> *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 13:22 ff.



rhymes in a stanza, answered by rhymes in the following stanza or stanzas, was followed by the troubadours from the first, and sometimes with the happiest effect. But Arnaut used this device more freely than any of his predecessors. In six of his *chansos* we find from three to thirteen isolated rhymes, and in no less than eight all the rhymes are isolated. Here he compensates for the absence of rhyme within the stanza by a scheme of subtle assonances. This practice was not followed by Dante nor by the Italians in general; but he speaks in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 13 of one Gotto of Mantua, who always put an isolated rhyme into his stanza.

The musical setting of the *canzone* determined the structure of the stanza in accordance with the rules given in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 10, where Arnaut's practice in regard to it is likewise adverted to. With the object of avoiding the monotonous iteration of short musical phrases, Arnaut usually set his poems to an undivided melody, and consequently adopted the undivided form of stanza which, though already in use, had not been so lavishly employed before.<sup>1</sup> But his crowning achievement was the Sestina,<sup>2</sup> a form in all probability invented by him. Here rhyme is discarded altogether, and the same six words occur as line-endings in each of the six stanzas, and in the *tornada* (or envoy) according to a particular scheme. The metrical structure

<sup>1</sup> See Canello, *op. cit.* 23-25; and Appel, *Bernart von Ventadorn*, xcvi. ff.

<sup>2</sup> Canello, No. xviii.

of this poem was imitated (with two slight modifications) by Dante in his *canzone* "*Al poco giorno*,"<sup>1</sup> and even surpassed by him in the extraordinary composition "*Amor tu vedi ben*,"<sup>2</sup> which he viewed with so much complacency. Another interesting development of the Sestina form is seen in the poem "*Al prim pres dels breus jorns braus*,"<sup>3</sup> by Aimeric de Belenoi, another of whose poems is cited in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 6, 12.

Arnaut Daniel's *chansos* smell strongly of the lamp, and more than once he alludes to his care in composition. He uses a large number of words not met with in any other troubadour, and a large number in an unusual sense, while, as might be expected in the supreme artist of the *trobar clus*, difficult inversions and complicated constructions are not wanting. There is also a wonderful variety in the length of his lines, which range from one to eleven syllables. The rhymes are excessively difficult; sometimes, indeed, he has to "cook" them, as, for instance, where he says Roam for Roma, and Luna-pampa for Pampaluna.<sup>4</sup> The result of all this is that his style is often cramped and affected; as when he declares, "A thousand times a day I yawn and stretch for that fair dame who surpasses all others as much as delight surpasses sorrow and vexation."<sup>5</sup> After this astonishing performance

<sup>1</sup> See *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 10: 15-28, and ii. 13: 5-14.

<sup>2</sup> "Oxford Dante," p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Appel, *Provenzalische Chrestomathie*, p. 71 (Leipzig, 1902), and see Chaytor, *The Troubadours of Dante*, p. 171 (Oxford, 1902), in which book the poem is also printed.

<sup>4</sup> *Dous brais e critz*, ll. 36, 40 (Canello, No. xii).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 13-16.

we are not surprised that the poet finds it necessary to protest that his fervent affection is not due to intoxication, or as he phrases it, "issues not from the bottle."<sup>1</sup>

In his references to Nature, Arnaut, though brief, is less perfunctory than most of the troubadours, and gives evidence of his sympathetic observation of her; though there is nothing in his poems comparable to Bernart de Ventadorn's famous description of the lark's song.<sup>2</sup>

The personification of Love, of which a good example occurs in the poem above translated (p. 206), is more thoroughly worked out by Arnaut than by most of the troubadours. It is noticeable that in the seemingly needless digression in the *Vita Nuova*,<sup>3</sup> where Dante justifies *his* personification of Love, he does not refer to Arnaut nor to any other *dicitor per rima*, but boldly appeals to the practice of the great Roman poets, thus exalting the despised vernacular to the august level of Latin.

Arnaut's influence over Dante is distinctly perceptible in the so-called *rime pietrose*, that is to say, the *canzoni* "*Al poco giorno*," "*Amor tu vedi ben*," "*Così nel mio parlar*," "*Io son venuto al punto della rota*," and the sonnet "*E' non è legno di sì forti nocchi*." The love which inspired them was the same love of which Arnaut sang,

<sup>1</sup> This occurs in "*Sim fos Amors*" (Canello, No. 17), cited in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Can vei la lauzeta mover* (Appel, No. 43).

<sup>3</sup> xxv. Cf. *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii. 6: 78 ff.



and, as Canello remarks,<sup>1</sup> Dante's psychological condition was at the time of their composition similar to Arnaut's, and disposed him to a sympathetic study of that poet. Arnaut plays upon the name of Laura, Dante plays still more persistently upon the word *pietra*, which has led to the belief that Pietra was the name of the lady by whom he had been infatuated.

The almost entire absence from the *Vita Nuova* poems and from those written in honour of Philosophy of references to the aspects of Nature, is remarkable, and not easy to explain. In "*Al poco giorno*," and still more in "*Io son venuto*," Dante was led—and, it may be, under Arnaut's guidance—to perceive the poetic value of Nature, and to turn his keen eye in that direction. The elaborate descriptions of the phenomena of Nature in winter in each of the five stanzas of "*Io son venuto*" give us a foretaste of the splendid results of Dante's Nature-study which meet us on every page of the Comedy.

I have already spoken of Dante's technical achievements in "*Al poco giorno*" and "*Amor tu vedi ben*," and only add that they are real poems, and not, like their prototype, little better than an exercise in metrical gymnastics. "*Io son venuto*" seems to be a preliminary essay in this style, for we find that the last two lines of every stanza end with the same word in the same sense: the words are, *pietra*, *donna*, *tempo*, *sempre*, *dolce*, and the first three of them are used as end-words in "*Amor tu vedi ben*." In "*Così nel mio*

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

*parlar*” the structure of the stanza is relatively simple ; we may, however, note the difficult rhymes *aspro*, *diaspro* ; *scorza*, *forza* ; *corro*, *borro*, *soccorro* ; and the equivocal rhyme *latra* (adj.) and *latra* (verb) in lines 58, 59. In the ethical *canzoni* “*Doglia mi reca*,” “*Le dolci rime*” (on which the fourth treatise of the *Convivio* is a comment), and “*Poscia che Amor*” the indirect influence of Arnaut Daniel may perhaps be traced in the extreme complication of the structure of the stanzas and in the varied length of their lines.

Having seen how Dante, under the stress of an overpowering passion, was influenced by Arnaut Daniel in the composition of certain poems, we now come to the troubadour whom he associates with himself and “his friend” as a singer of righteousness, and with whom, in his better moments, he was in far greater sympathy than with Arnaut—I mean Giraut de Bornelh. Little is authentically known of Giraut’s life, save that he frequented the courts of the sovereigns of Navarre, Castile and Aragon ; and that he took part with Richard Cœur-de-Lion in the Third Crusade. He was a man of learning ;<sup>1</sup> and the *razo* to one of his poems mentions that he was robbed of his house and of his books by the satellites of Guy V, Viscount of Limoges, in 1211.<sup>2</sup> Another *razo* informs us that he would spend the winter in study, and the summer in visiting various courts, accompanied by two minstrels to perform his songs ; and that he gave his earnings to his

<sup>1</sup> *Can branchal brondels e rama*, st. vii (Kolsen, No. 39).

<sup>2</sup> Chabaneau, *op. cit.* 16, n. 3.

poor relations and to the church of his native place.<sup>1</sup> But if we are scantily informed as to his outward life, his poems, of which nearly eighty have survived, tell us much of his character and views. He was of a proud and sensitive disposition; his career as a lover was on the whole unhappy, and he bitterly felt and deeply resented the slights which his mistress put upon him.<sup>2</sup> There is hardly a trace of sensuality in his affection; thrice, indeed, he expressly disclaims it,<sup>3</sup> and in a fourth passage reprobates it.<sup>4</sup> His *Alba* (above, p. 194) is quite out of keeping with the tone of all his other poems, and must be regarded as a singular concession to popular taste. He is, in fact, the prophet of chivalrous love at its best, free from the baser emotions of some of his predecessors and contemporaries, and from the conventional affectation of his successors. But it is his moral poems which chiefly attracted Dante's sympathy; and their influence on the *canzoni* "*Le dolci rime*" and "*Poscia ch'Amor*" is unmistakable. The latter, indeed, might be described as an attempt to write in Giraut's manner, and the closeness of the imitation is intensified by the use of the Provençalisms *missione*, *fallenza*, and *coraggi*; while *donneare* and *sollazzo* are the Italian equivalents of *domnejar*, *solatz*, technical terms in the language of

<sup>1</sup> Chabaneau, *op. cit.* 14.

<sup>2</sup> See especially *Ioïs e chans*, st. vi (Kolsen, No. 47).

<sup>3</sup> *Amars, onrars e charteners*, st. iv (Kolsen, No. 6); *Chans en brolh*, st. vii (Kolsen, No. 22); *Si sotils sens*, st. iii (Kolsen, No. 51).

<sup>4</sup> *Ges aisi del tot nom lais*, st. vi, vii (Kolsen, No. 45), and cf. the Pastorela *L'altrer lo primer jorn d'aost* (Kolsen, No. 56).



chivalrous love. By way of illustration I quote a short passage from one of Giraut's finest moral *sirventes*,<sup>1</sup> cited in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 6, as the first example of an "illustrious *canzone*." "The world was good when joy was everywhere welcomed, when nobleness was united to high rank. But now it is the worst men who are called good, and he is said to be 'superior' who is least filled with joy, while the man will be most envied who gathers as much of other people's property as ever he can. . . . Reason has gone astray, since men have deemed the bad good and judged the noble, the courteous, and the true to be the worst." The fourth stanza of this poem should also be compared with the second of "*Poscia ch'Amor*."<sup>2</sup> Similarly the germ of the doctrine of nobleness set forth in "*Le dolci rime*" and *Convivio* iv. is to be found in Giraut's "*Molt era dolz e plazens*" (Kolsen, No. 64); while, as I have pointed out elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> the *canzone* "*Tre donne*" is, as to its dramatic form, a direct imitation of "*Lo dolz chans d'un auzel*."<sup>4</sup>

As I have already mentioned, there is little sense of religious obligation in the songs of most of the twelfth-century troubadours; but it is far otherwise with Giraut de Bornelh, in whose poems the note of religious exhortation is not infrequently heard. Two of his poems (Kolsen, Nos. 70, 74) are entirely religious;

<sup>1</sup> *Si per mon Sobre-Totz no fos* (Kolsen, No. 73).

<sup>2</sup> Reference may also be made to *Nos pot sofrir ma lenga qu'ilh non dia* (Kolsen, No. 69).

<sup>3</sup> *Dante, his Life and Work*, p. 60 (Jack & Nelson, 1920).

<sup>4</sup> Kolsen, No. 55.

as, of course, are the two crusading songs.<sup>1</sup> Like Dante,<sup>2</sup> Giraut blames the Pope for not bestirring himself in the holy cause. The Pope, he says, is so fast asleep between Tierce and Nones that he has no leisure to urge the barons to go against the Saracens. But whereas with Dante the deliverance of the Holy Land was a matter important indeed, but secondary, in Giraut's eyes, it was a valuable means of grace, and almost the central point of the Christian religion.

Giraut essayed both the *trobar clus* and the *trobar leu*, and his utterances on their respective merits are conflicting. In one place he declares that a song lacks its full worth unless all can enjoy it, and that he likes to hear his songs in the mouths of the water-carriers on their way to the spring.<sup>3</sup> Again, in a *tenso* with his friend and patron Linhaure (Raimbaut, Count of Orange), he asks what is the good of composing poetry unless any one can understand it at once?<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, however, he deliberately charges his language with "a strange and noble meaning, though all do not understand with what meaning";<sup>5</sup> and in another place he deprecates "singing for all in common."<sup>6</sup> It must be confessed that in whatever style he may be writing, Giraut is nearly always difficult, though the difficulty arises as frequently from a natural

<sup>1</sup> Kolsen, Nos. 60, 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Inferno* xxvii. 89; *Paradiso* ix. 124-142.

<sup>3</sup> *A penas sai comensar*, st. ii (Kolsen, No. 4).

<sup>4</sup> Kolsen, No. 58.

<sup>5</sup> *Si m sentis fizels amics*, st. vi (Kolsen, No. 27).

<sup>6</sup> *La flors del verjan*, st. iii (Kolsen, No. 26).

originality of expression as from intentional obscurity; and in one place he allows that it is harder to write clearly than to write obscurely.<sup>1</sup> We can now guess why it is that Dante makes no mention of Bernart de Ventadorn, a fact which has often caused surprise, seeing that to modern taste Bernart would probably stand first in merit among the troubadours. But he was not the sort of poet whom Dante most admired. Though his technique fully reaches the high standard of the troubadours generally, he does not attempt to compete with other poets in metrical ingenuities which would indeed be quite incompatible with his style; nor is this blemish—for blemish it would be in Dante's estimation—redeemed by any moral or religious fervour or philosophic subtlety. This being so, the prominent place given in the *Purgatorio* to so second-rate a poet as Sordello is at first sight puzzling, and needs explanation. Dante's first mention of this troubadour is in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* i. 15, where he appears to intimate that Sordello, after some literary attempts in his local Mantuan dialect, forsook his native tongue entirely. He had, in fact, after numerous wanderings and adventures (including an intrigue with the too-famous Cunizza), secured a footing at the court of Raymond Berenger IV, Count of Provence, by 1233; and must thenceforward be considered a Provençal. The forty-two poems of his that we possess are all in the Provençal tongue. They comprise *chansos*, *tensos*, *sirventes*,

<sup>1</sup> *Leu chansonet' e vil*, st. i (Kolsen, No. 48).



and a long didactic poem known as "*L'ensenhamen d'onor*."<sup>1</sup> His love-poems are of no special interest or importance. They are in the conventional style of the thirteenth century; but Sordello rather over-acts the part of the devout lover, and is at times very affected. His *sirventes* and *tensos* have greater individuality; the *Ensenhamen* may rank with Tupper's once famous *Proverbial Philosophy*.<sup>2</sup> But one happy inspiration visited Sordello, and procured him the sort of pinchbeck immortality he now enjoys. On the occasion of the death (probably in 1237) of his patron Blacatz, one of the chief nobles of Provence, instead of composing a dirge in the approved solemn style, with an intricate melody, it occurred to him to write in simple mono-rhymed stanzas, set to an easy tune, a satire on the chief sovereigns of the time, the Emperor (Frederick II), the Kings of France (Louis IX), England (Henry III), Castile (Ferdinand III), Aragon (James I), Navarre (Thibaut I), and the Counts of Toulouse (Raymond VII) and Provence (Raymond Berenger IV), who are bidden to eat of the heart of Blacatz in order to gain a martial spirit and make head

<sup>1</sup> Forty of the poems, including the *Ensenhamen*, were published by de Lollis in his *Vita e Poesie di Sordello di Goito* (Halle, 1896); and two others subsequently discovered by Bertoni were published by him in the *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, xxxviii. 269 ff. He also published in the same article a poem in a north Italian dialect, which he considered might have been written by Sordello.

<sup>2</sup> One passage (ll. 909-928), where Sordello describes the rich "poor-spirited and void of understanding," who "living are dead," affords a pretty close parallel to *Inferno* iii. 61-64. Extracts from the *Ensenhamen* are given in Chaytor, *op. cit.* 77 ff.

against their foes. Henry III must "eat much of the heart," for that he is poor-spirited; Louis IX will only eat of it if his mother will let him; while James I must eat it on the sly, for if his mother heard of it she would give him a thrashing. The correspondence between this list of sovereigns and that of those whom Sordello rebukes in *Purgatorio* vii. 91 ff.<sup>1</sup> leaves us in no doubt that it was the *sirventes* on the death of Blacatz which suggested to Dante the employment of Sordello in the function assigned to him in the *Purgatorio*. His sojourn in the Ante-purgatory had been long enough to improve the historical Sordello almost beyond recognition,<sup>2</sup> and Dante's presentment of him would have caused some merriment among his fellow-poets at the court of the Count of Provence; but a trace of the old insolent levity is discernible where he uses the nicknames Big-nose and Little-nose (*Nasuto*, *Nasetto*) to designate Charles of Anjou and Philip III of France.

Of the greater troubadours, two others must be briefly referred to, Bertran de Born and Folquet of Marseilles. Bertran's turbulent character and war-like career earned him his place in the *Inferno* among the sowers of discord, and are faithfully reflected in his *sirventes*. His dirge on the death of Prince Henry of England—the "young king"—is one of the most beautiful pieces in the whole range of Provençal literature, while his few love-poems are distinguished

<sup>1</sup> It is worked out in detail by de Lollis, *op. cit.* 91, 92.

<sup>2</sup> The date of his death is unknown, but he was living in 1269.

by characteristic vigour and originality. His technical skill is of the high order one would expect from a friend of Arnaut Daniel, as Bertran probably was. His poem "*Non posc mudar*," cited in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 2 as a specimen of a war-song, is in its metrical structure an imitation of Arnaut's "*Sim fos Amors*" (above, p. 212, n. 1). In *Convivio* iv. 11 : 128, Dante includes him among various potentates as an example of munificence,<sup>1</sup> which virtue is there designated by the Provençal term *missione*.

Folquet, son of a Genoese merchant settled at Marseilles, inherited a fortune from his father, and followed the career of a troubadour, his chief patrons having been Alfonso II of Aragon, Richard Cœur-de-Lion, Raymond VII Count of Toulouse, and Barral Viscount of Marseilles. His earlier life, if we may believe the *razos* to two of his poems,<sup>2</sup> was not free from scandal, but in maturer age he renounced the world and became a Cistercian monk. In or after 1201 he became Abbot of Toronet, and Bishop of Toulouse in 1205, which see he held till his death in 1231. As bishop he was distinguished by his vigour in the prosecution of the Albigensian crusade against heresy, and by the assistance he gave to St. Dominic in the establishment of the Friars Preachers. Dante pondered this story, and from it evolved, with extraordinary skill and subtlety, the scene in *Paradiso* ix.

<sup>1</sup> See Paget Toynbee, *Dante Studies and Researches*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Stroński, *Le troubadour Folquet de Marseille*, pp. 4-6 (Cracow, 1910).



82 ff., as Zingarelli has pointed out.<sup>1</sup> The elaborate geographical paraphrasis with which the passage opens indicates the scenes of Folquet's poetic activity; the significance of the word *arse* (l. 97) comes from his *chanso* "*En chantan m'aven a membrar*";<sup>2</sup> Dido, Phyllis and Iole point to the three ladies said to have been loved by him; the invective against Florence was suggested by a poem composed by him in 1195 to exhort the princes of the West to succour the Kings of Castile and Aragon against the victorious Arabs;<sup>3</sup> while the rest of the passage is elicited in subtle fashion from the story of Folquet's conversion and his ecclesiastical career.

Folquet's poems are remarkable for their artificiality, and he may perhaps be claimed as a precursor of the Guinizellian school in virtue of his "methodical application of the processes of scholasticism to the ancient commonplaces of the *chanso*."<sup>4</sup> This would be a passport to Dante's favourable consideration, and account for the honourable place assigned to Folquet in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* ii. 6.

Enough has now been said in illustration of the troubadours' influence on Dante. They furnished him with examples of technical skill in vernacular lyric poetry immeasurably surpassing any that his

<sup>1</sup> *La personalità storica di Folchetto di Marsiglia nella Commedia di Dante* (Bologna, 1899).

<sup>2</sup> Stroński, *op. cit.* No. V. (p. 27).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *op. cit.* No. XIX. (p. 83).

<sup>4</sup> A. Jeanroy, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February 1, 1903, p. 681; and cf. Stroński, *op. cit.* 73\* ff.

Italian predecessors could supply; and if in their *chansos* they were, as to subject-matter, rather a hindrance than a help, as we saw in speaking of the earlier part of the *Vita Nuova*, their *sirventes* furnished models for such outbursts of invective as *Purgatorio* vi. 76 ff. and *Paradiso* xxii. 70 ff., which are, in fact, *sirventes* embodied in the structure of the Comedy. But there is more than this: the vanished life of courtly chivalry, which was the background of the troubadours' lyrics, had a powerful attraction for Dante.<sup>1</sup> He could sympathise with Giraut de Bornelh's longing for the good old days, when "for the sake of a glove thrown among the young courtiers a chivalrous contest arose which lasted for all the rest of the year."<sup>2</sup> But while Giraut could only turn his despairing glance backward, Dante, with his wider moral vision, comforted himself in the words with which, in the famous *canzone* of the Three Ladies<sup>3</sup> "Amore" heartened his disconsolate kinswomen:—

"Drizzate i colli . . .  
Larghezza e Temperanza e l'altre nate  
Del nostro sangue mendicando vanno,  
Però se questo è danno  
Pianganlo gli occhi, e dolgasi la bocca  
Degli nomini a cui tocca  
Che sono a' raggi di cotal ciel giunti;  
Non noi, che semo dell' eterna rocca."

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, *Purgatorio* xiv. 103 ff.; *Convivio* iv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Lo dolz chans d'un auzel*, st. v. (Kolsen, No. 55).

<sup>3</sup> "Oxford Dante," p. 171.





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# HUMOUR OF DANTE

LONSDALE RAGG.

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## HUMOUR OF DANTE

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"CICERO hath observed," says the *Spectator* of November 5, 1714, "that a jest is never uttered with a better grace than when it is accompanied with a serious countenance."

If we combine this with Burton's citation from Aristotle in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* that "melancholy men of all others are most witty," we seem to have proved a *prima facie* case for the possibility of a humorous strain in the austere-faced poet of the Divine Comedy, whom Boccaccio describes (*Vita*, § 8) as "nella faccia sempre malinconico e pensoso."

Aristotle's "witty"—if we rightly trace the quotation to the *De Divinatione per Somnum* (ii. 464a : 33)—is not exactly witty in our modern sense, yet it is really germane to the subject, for it implies imaginative gifts—a swift intuition, such as graces the scientific inventor, and the power of seeing quaint and happy analogies (*εὐστοχία*, cf. *Rhet.* iii. 11 : 1412a).

We believe that Professor Sannia was right in his main contention, when in 1909 he claimed that the popular tradition of a humourless Dante is a travesty and a libel. Dante was at once too great and too human to be devoid of this saving grace, though the



very sublimity of his work tends to draw our attention away from the playful flashes, the subtler ironies, the masterly handling of the grotesque, and from that readiness to turn the flashlight upon his own weaknesses and to look at himself from outside which redeem him at once from affinity to the "cattivo coro" of those who "take themselves too seriously."

"Laughter," says Dante himself (*Convivio* III. viii. 96), "is a coruscation of the soul's delight." And such "coruscation" is described by Boccaccio, when he pictures to us the poet as "sorridente alquanto," when he overhears the gossips of Verona commenting on the crisped hair and darkened complexion of the man who "goes down to Hell and returns at will to bring back word of those below."

A like smile—only not so self-betraying as the "lampeggiar di riso" of *Purgatorio* xxi. 114—must have followed on his own famous utterance on the road from Porciano, when, according to tradition, the poet's ready wit saved him at once from bodily arrest and from verbal mendacity. "Is Dante Alighieri at Porciano?" asks the Florentine envoy of the escaping refugee. "Quando io era, v'era" ("When I was there, he was"), came out the deliciously ironical reply.

The group of would-be humorous stories about him collected in Dr. Paget Toynbee's *Life* (3rd ed., pp. 176 *sqq.*), authentic or otherwise, strike one in the main as clumsy and heavy, and unworthy of the author of the *Divine Comedy*, though they witness

to a popular tradition that Dante's severe austerity had another side. But such a tradition as that recorded by the *Anonimo Fiorentino* on the episode of Belacqua (*Purgatorio* iv. 106 *sqq.*) has a more convincing ring. Belacqua excuses his own laziness, quoting Aristotle to the effect that "by repose and quiet the mind attains to wisdom." "Certainly," rips out his friend, "if repose will make a man wise, you ought to be the wisest man on earth."

When we turn to Dante's own works, we meet at once flashes of humour of a grim sort that would be recognised and acknowledged by all—the biting satire of his invectives against degenerate Florence and the Papal Court, concentrated now and again upon individuals, as upon the Simoniacal Popes, and particularly on Boniface VIII. These are too obvious to need more than a general and passing reference. The grotesque horseplay of the Demons in *Inferno* xxi–xxiii., at first sight unworthy of any self-respecting poet, and descending ultimately to the level of sheer vulgarity, acquires a new interest if we regard it as a delicately adjusted attempt to pour appropriate scorn and ridicule on the revolting foolishness of sin. We may interpret it in the light of Dante's own comment on a similar scene—the vulgar harlequinade of Sinon and Maestro Adamo in *Inferno* xxx., where the poet depicts himself as blushing with shame when Virgil reproves his childish absorption in the unworthy spectacle (*Inferno* xxx. 131). This habit of visualising his own shortcomings—his hesitation, his falterings, his

cowardice—of drawing our attention to a puny Dante hiding behind a rock, or a faint-hearted poet needing the spur of Virgil's tongue or the encouragement of his leadership—is in some ways the surest guarantee that the sense of humour is not wanting.

The man whose attitude towards himself is such, is evidently far removed from that pompous self-importance which takes itself so seriously that its only relation to the humorous is that of supplying unconscious material for legitimate ridicule. If there is irony here it is not of the mordant, trenchant kind—that response “not with words, but with a *knife*,” which in the *Convivio* (IV. xiv. 105) he declares to be a meet retort to senseless stupidity. And the genial irony which sometimes plays about his own figure as we accompany him on the mystic pilgrimage, gives place to the most delightful playfulness in those inimitable scenes where Virgil and Statius are together his companions in the twenty-first and twenty-second cantos of *Purgatorio*.

The charming situation which arises out of the fact that Virgil and Dante know who Statius is, while he as yet is not aware that he is in the presence of that author of the *Æneid* for whose acquaintance in the world below he protests he would gladly have undergone an extra year of purgatorial discipline, is matched later on by the scene in the Earthly Paradise where Matilda gravely discourses to Dante, in the presence of the two Roman poets, of those “who in ancient days sang of the Golden Age” (*Purgatorio* xxviii. 139-47).



Dante turns round, and sees a smile pass from one to another of his poet companions.

Less exquisite, but perhaps more remarkable in its way, is his attribution of laughter to spirits who have not yet, like Statius, won their release—the mirth that rises to the lips of penitents still “serving their time” in purgatorial discipline. On the Terrace of Avarice, Midas’s self-inflicted distress—“per la qual sempre convien che si rida”—is a constant source of glee (*Purgatorio* xx. 108), as is also the fate of Crassus—his dead mouth crammed full of the gold for which in life he had been so hungry: “Tell us, Crassus, for thou knowest, what is the flavour of gold?” (xx. 116 *sq.*).

Dante is not only ready to poke fun at himself when occasion serves, he is also bold enough to introduce a similar situation into Heaven itself, and to picture St. Gregory the Great “waking up” in his proper celestial sphere to a sense of the absurdity of his own mistake in deviating from the “Dionysian” scheme of the Angelic Hierarchy (*Paradiso* xxviii. 135).

It is unnecessary to labour the point by quotations from the *Convivio*—where each of the four *Trattati* might furnish us with instances—or from the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, where he makes mischievous allusions to the quaint phonetics of the various Italian dialects of his day. Here, too, as in the *Commedia*, there are touches of bitter sarcasm, especially when political themes are touched, as in the references to Azzo of Este (in II. vi.) and to Charles of Valois.

In a more playful strain he drives home a lesson against over-ornate versifying, taking up a phrase of Horace.

“Optat ephippia bos piger . . .,” he declares. “We do not speak of an ox caparisoned as a horse, or a belted pig as *ornatus*, we laugh at them, and would rather apply the term *deturpatus*.”

There are limits to the incongruity of adornment which cannot be tolerated!

Dante, after all, was a Florentine: a native of that city of which the poet's elder contemporary, the jovial Friar Salimbene of Parma, declared that its citizens were the greatest wags of their generation: “Florentini maximi trufatores sunt.” Similarly Prof. Sannia reminds us that the poet *must* have inherited a strain of humour in his Tuscan blood—“il genio comico e satirico fu in lui impronta, eredità etnica.”

His humour is, on the whole, wonderfully restrained. There is none of the boisterous jollity of Shakespeare's comic scenes, nor of the rollicking breadth of Sacchetti's or Boccaccio's style of humour. In the *Convivio* he expressly deprecates the “cackling” laughter that argues utter want of restraint.

In the *Inferno*, as we have seen, he most nearly “lets himself go” to the verge of vulgarity—but with a definite purpose. And Benedetto Croce has pointed out, even in this first *Cantica*, instances of a light and mischievous playfulness (*La Poesia di Dante*, p. 57), more in the vein of what we find in the second.

It has seemed worth while to draw attention to

this subject when Dante's name is in every mouth as the "altissimo poeta." For without a sense of humour — that "giftie" which takes us out of ourselves, opens for us a true perspective, enables us to sympathise with human frailty, and "going through the Vale of Misery" to "use it for a well"—a man cannot be a full man, nor a poet a full poet. It is because he possesses this gift that his poem touches the imagination as it does, and thrills the heart :—

Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.





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‘ A QUEL MODO CHE DITTA DENTRO ’

ANTONIO CIPPICO.

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“A QUEL MODO CHE DITTA DENTRO”

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*A don Gelasio Caetani.*

FUORI quasi della soglia di questo libro di omaggio all' Alighieri, nel quale abbiamo convitati, in questo anno santo del sesto centenario della sua morte, a modesto ma festevole simposio, alcuni spiriti devoti all' alta poesia, desidero d'auguralmente porre il tuo nome, amico mio molto caro, che, disceso del più nobile sangue d'Italia e d'Inghilterra, sei, a mezzo dell' avo, insigne dantista, e dell' atavo tuo, l' ottavo Bonifacio, così intimamente, oltre che per lo studio diuturno, per me collegato—alla opera immortale di Dante. E in queste poche pagine che nel volgare nostro chiudono il volume mio e degli altri “miei migliori,” poi che arduo sarebbe alla mia coscienza, nè di settator d'ignoranza nè di professore “sudante in traccia del veltro,” scoprire o dire cose mai prima dette, voglio continuare certi nostri colloqui dilettoni, iniziati, meno di un anno fa, in una loggetta aperta sopra uno spiazzo arborato, per oltre al quale scorreva, senza quasi voce, la Bormida verde sotto quattro grandi archi di acquedotto romano. Ricordi? Eravamo ambedue, inferme le membra, con la speranza

della guarigione, presso al bulicame di uno di quegli spenti vulcani che sono testimoni perenni del grande fuoco che tuttora è nelle viscere più profonde della nostra terra, del fuoco originario in cui l'Italia ingenera la nostra stirpe aspra e crucciosa, del fuoco ond'è tutto "ciò che fummo e saremo." Era naturale, forse, in quella nostra solitudine, tra la folla degl' infermi, dentro al cratere stesso del morto vulcano, d'onde solforose e fumose affiorano perpetuamente le calde misteriose acque di sotterra, che nei tramonti di sangue appaiono vive d'un "bollor vermiglio," noi confortassimo con Dante i nostri ozi e i nostri lunghi conversari. Io estraevo—ricordi?—a quando a quando dalla tasca una *Commedia* di piccolo formato, ch'è viatico fedele della mia esistenza: e da mane e da sera, il cantare di Dante comentava a noi ogni pensiero, colorava ogni discussione, illuminava i fatti del mondo tuttavia sospeso fra la guerra e la pace. Nelle fresche notti di stelle o di luna, saliti faticosamente le lacche e i gironi di qualcuna di quelle dantesche colline, arse e pure lussureggianti di vigne e di messi, ch' impendono sulle Terme, simili a minuscole montagne di *Purgatorio*, ci rifugiavamo, soli o con un dolce amico, sotto la pergola pampinosa di qualche osteria campagnuola, a riposarci dell' aspra via e a riepilogare, con la lettura di qualche terzina dantesca, i nostri discorsi. Qualche falena sperduta cozzava, per ebrietà di luce, nel vetro della fioca lampana appesa a un tronco fronzuto. Tra la frasca ammiccavano altissime, ora sì ora no, sopra di noi le stelle. Tu mi parlavi de' tuoi

grandi antenati, con quella sicura conoscenza storica che di loro hai, oltre che dallo studio, dal tuo stesso sangue. E il terribile guerriero pontefice, gloria prima della tua casata, “ che gittò in terra Penestrino ” e l’arò, mi appariva, così, fra luce e ombra, sullo sfondo della notte, oltre che nelle tue parole, nella vivezza degli occhi e nel tuo volto affilato e saldo e glabro, in cui è il sigillo fiero della tua specie. Bonifacio m’era presente e vivo a quel modo, assai più formidabile che nell’ affresco giottesco, come mai prima nella vita, come mai prima nella storia letta. Il buon Moscato di Strevi, così dolce e frizzantino, indorava i bicchieri. Tutt’ intorno, per i colli e su dalle valli, saliva il canto insonne e assiduo dei grilli, intermesso nei silenzi succeduti a una terzina o a una tua evocazione della l’ antica istoria, che ne appariva recente come se contemporanea. Il tempo era per noi, in quelle ore, abolito. Lo sostituiva con la sua luce senza ombre, la Poesia.

Riusciti all’ aperto, giù per la china, tu, sotto quella pioggia delle vergini stelle, mi narravi ancora i casi della tragedia familiare della donna dei Tolomei. L’ ombra di lei n’era a paro nella discesa, assurta su di non so qual burratello. Ci ricantava nei cuori, pietosa : “ Ricordati di me che son la Pia.” E riera quasi non ombra più, ma viva e dolente, come già in Maremma, nella sua vita triste.

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Se noi, volevo dunque dirti, in questo sesto centenario, pubblicamente celebriamo la “ grande anima



redita ” dell’ Alighieri, non è per coloro con i quali sempre ella è stata ed è, sì perchè all’ obliosa umanità giova trarre il pretesto di una data, a ridarle, sia pure per un giorno, la conoscenza dei suoi Luminari—chè l’abitudine quotidiana la fa cieca al sole e alle stelle,— a accennarle le vette più alte dello spirito, a incitarla, se possibile, verso nuove ascensioni. “Ascensiones in corde meo disposui,” consiglia e comanda l’alto Salmista. Onde se Dante, da oggi, da questo suo anno di giubileo, potrà riapparir tutta nova e limpida luce, e contemporanea perchè perpetua, a coloro che a lui con studio e ingegno s’avvicineranno, queste sue feste centenarie, pur con l’eccesso della straripante retorica che inevitabilmente le accompagna, non saranno state in vano.

Chè la lettura e l’interpretazione e la conoscenza della sua opera sono giunte, o m’inganno, finalmente, oggi, a un bivio. Da un lato è la strada lunga e tortuosa, percorsa, nei secoli della varia ammirazione o della crassa dimenticanza, dai fedeli zelatori del Poeta, più quasi sempre teneri di proprie ideologie individuali settarie, filosofiche o teologiche o storiche o filologiche o politiche. Dall’ altro è il cammino diritto di tutti coloro che nell’ opera di Dante hanno, nei secoli, quasi con timoroso pudore e senza confessarlo, null’ altro cercato di trovare che la consolazione della poesia.

“La grandezza di questo divin poeta, che in molti modi largamente si manifesta a chi l’attende con diligenza, tanto più veramente è mirabile, quanto

più nella sua *Commedia* abbondantissimamente si trova da soddisfarsi e da contentarsi in qualunque si voglia cosa che intrattenere e dilettrar possa la mente.” Il Giambullari, che queste parole ha scritte in una epoca in cui l’ammirazione per Dante era venuta rapidamente scemando, accenna qui a quella ch’è virtù massima del Poema, all’ universalità, ma porge facile pretesto a chi voglia o non voglia, di cercare in esso, o piuttosto, come quasi sempre è avvenuto, di porre “ qualunque si voglia cosa ”: a cercarvi cioè tante altre cose che non sono la poesia dell’ Alighieri, e a mettervi, con la scusa della critica o dell’ interpretazione, ogni sorta cose che nulla hanno a che fare con quella poesia.

Sviati forse dallo stesso Dante, che in una sua sentenza antepone il vero letterale o “ fittizio ” (“ sempre lo letterale dee andare inanzi ”) agli altri veri, perchè li contiene, pure i migliori e più puri devoti della *Commedia* hanno posto in non cale o obliato, quasi sempre, il senso e il vero, ch’è ben più alto e illuminante, della poesia. La moltitudine grande, poi, ha preferito arrabattarsi faticosamente, ahimè sempre, intorno al vero anagogico o “ sovrapposto,” o, ch’è quasi peggio, all’ allegorico o unico “ verace.” E come in vaso senza fondo, ognuno ha voluto specchiare o versare in esso la propria piccolezza. Questa sorte toccata al Poema Sacro è, dunque, unica nella storia della grande poesia. Chè, per quanti esegeti abbiano ponzato e Bibbia e Omero e Shakespeare, nessuno di questi testi è stato tanto fondamentalmente e voluttuo-

samente svisato e falsato nei secoli, quanto il Dante. Dagl' interpreti teologici filosofici e pietisti, da Benvenuto imolese a Francesco da Buti, dal Filelfo al Landino, da Leonardo Aretino a Jacopo Mazzoni, dal Vellutello a Jason de Nores, che s'armeggiarono a concordare elementi discordi, scolastica e umanesimo, tomismo e Platone, allegoria e poesia, per darci l'immagine di un Dante loico, etico e teologo e filosofo; sino ai settatori della nostra storia nazionale, al Gioberti, al Balbo, al Mazzini, al Rosmini e specialmente a Gabriele Rossetti, che su dall' opera sua per amor d'Italia estrassero, tutta sola ne' suoi bassi tempi, l'alma sdegnosa del primo e maggiore patriotta italiano, del primo profeta della nazione; per finire coi molti, coi troppi dottori sottilissimi, che, negli ultimi cinquant'anni, s'accanirono a discettare con i ferruzzi della grammatica, dell' erudizione e, ahimè, della filologia pura, le tre cantiche e le minori opere dell' Alighieri—è gran mercè se oggi ci sia dato di volere e di potere ripristinare nelle anime nostre la religione del Poeta, alla quale sono necessari, sì, studio ingegno e conoscenza storica, ma solo, come altamente ha scritto Benedetto Croce, “ in funzione di poesia.”

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Ho voluto leggere, negli ultimi tempi, quasi a affogare nella loro aridezza capziosa la tragedia della anima mia per la sorte toccata alla mia terra natale dopo la guerra vittoriosa dell' Italia, non so quanti mai testi, che non avevo prima che sfuggevolmente sfogliati, di comentatori e esegeti della *Commedia*.



Giunto, con fra le mani Benvenuto, a “ quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante ” di Francesca, e letto il comentario “ Et dicit ” : “ Soli eravamo . . . ,” ecce aliud incitamentum, quia proverbialiter dicitur quod opportunitas facit homines fures et foeminas meretrices,” ah, per Dio, non ho più letto avante, nè più mai leggerò, l’Imolese.

Apersi altro, non più moderno, libracciò, altra volta, il quale per filologicamente dimostrarmi che ben “ Dante ” (che dà, per il Boccaccio stesso, “ con liberale animo le cose di grazia ricevute da Dio ”) era accorciativo di “ Durante ”—importantissima verità lapalissiana—afferma che l’emistichio “ *mar* di tutto il senno ” dell’ ottavo canto dell’ Inferno includeva l’accorciamento di “ Marone ” (Vergilio).

E così dall’ Anonimo delle Chiose del 1337 al grande “ fanciullino,” ma maggiore poeta, che fu il nostro Giovanni Pascoli, io mi sono quasi sperduto, per alcuni mesi, nella selva veramente oscura della ponderosa o ridevole “ erudizione ” dantesca, per esserne tratto fuori in tempo a salvamento solo dalla misericordia dello stesso Dante, che, a comento di quegl’ inutilissimi o ingenui o gaglioffi o presuntuosi comenti, riconsegnò alla mia nausea e al mio dispetto la lucerna unica possibile, atta a penetrare il suo regno trino : quella della poesia.

Ah non più, ora, mi lambiccheranno e tortureranno il cervello gli enigmisti, i fossilizzatori, i fossori, i cabalisti, i geologi, e gl’indovini delle tre fiere, delle “ tre disposizioni,” delle “ tre rovine,” del “ veltro ” e

dei semplici o duplici “schemi penali.” Non più vorrò sulle loro orme indagare, perchè, senza irriverenza a alcuno, e tanto meno a Dante, in verità non me ne importa un bel corno, se colui del “gran rifiuto” sia o non sia Celestino o Pilato o Diocleziano o Romolo Augustolo o Giano della Bella o Esaù o Vieri dei Cerchi; se la Bice sia o non sia Sapienza o Virtù o Idea o Teologia, o la madre della Contessa Matilde (che “fu figlia dello imperator di Constantinopoli” e “morì in Pisa nel 1116”) o la “favolosa Pandora” filelfiana, o l’Impero contrapposto dal Rossetti alla Meretrice vaticana, o “intelligenza attiva illuminatrice dell’ intelletto possibile,” o “oggettivazione di una intima e profonda soggettività”; se Vergilio sia studio o sia scienza, se gli spiriti ostili all’ apparizione di Bice siano i “contrastì,” se le compagne di lei “discipline dello spirito”; se la morte del padre della gentilissima di Dante sia, ahimè, la morte di Brunetto. Ah no, il messo di Dio, che passa Stige a aprire Dite, la Città roggia delle immani tombe, con una sua verghetta verde, non sarà più per me, pure per un istante, Enea; nè Matelda, tra la gran variazion dei freschi mai, sarà Mechtild von Magdeburg o, se meglio vi piaccia, la Contessa Matilde stessa (la figlia, dunque, della Beatrice identificata da Francesco da Buti!), consobrina di Enrico IV, stirpe salica, difesa del Papato.

A proposito di Matelda. Più di venti anni or sono, la mia ammirante e fervida giovinezza ebbe l’onore d’incontrarsi col Pascoli. In una trattoria romana,

presenti la sua sorella Mariù e il poeta nobilissimo fra tutti, Adolfo de Bosis, io, giovinetto, con nella anima canora le musiche di “Myricae” e dei “Poemetti,” pendevo, muto, dalle labbra del semplice e grande ultimo “figlio di Vergilio.” Questi parlò di poesia antica e moderna alla mia beatitudine. A un tratto, però, egli, così schivo e modesto nel parlar della sua propria poesia, prese a vantarsi, come ne’ suoi libri danteschi più tardi ha voluto fare, di aver trovato “tra i roghi e i bronchi che la nascondevano, la porticciuola del gran tempio mistico” di Dante. Una strana fiamma gl’illuminava i piccoli ma vividi occhi. Affermò, quasi con ira: “Io ho veduto.” E degli altri disse poi che “avevano veduto, senz’ entrare,” ma ch’egli solo, con la sua chiave scoperta, v’era entrato.

Attonito e ammirato, ma senza comprendere, fissavo il volto acceso del mio buon Poeta. Ma la mia ammirazione cedette allo smarrimento, quando egli volle persuadermi che nessuno aveva mai potuto comprendere il “vero” di Matelda prima di lui, e che quella Beata, il cui nome egli faceva derivare dalla etimologia di “μανθάνω,” non era altra che una “Maestra della scuola e dell’ arte.”

Non quella, no, poteva essere, pur nel mio rispetto al Maestro, interpretazione di poesia, degna di una delle più alte e pure “bellezze,” che Jacopo di Dante offeriva nel calendimaggio del 1322 a Guido da Polenta, col testo primo della *Commedia*,

“Che *mia sorella* nel suo lume porta.”



Ben è vero che il Pascoli stesso, il quale mai non va confuso con la gente dispetta a meraviglia, che nasce e vive “in prosa,” come il Balbo la definì, a mal grado della sua letifica infatuazione dantesca, ebbe altra volta magnificamente a dire: “Solo ora che il tempo dei santi sembra già molto lontano, e lontano è quello degli asceti e dei teologi, solo ora il Poema Sacro, che stupì e commosse, ispira quel sentimento che non si deve confondere con nessun altro, e si chiama ‘poesia.’ Chè ‘poesia’ è rivivere ciò che fu, riviverlo improvvisamente e pienamente, avanti un tempio dalle colonne corcate a terra, avanti un poema dal linguaggio antico e disusato, rialzando a un tratto con la leva del sogno quelle gigantesche colonne e ricreando, col soffio del pensiero, quel mondo immenso.”

Col pensiero, cioè, ma più, se possibile, con la leva stessa e con la luce *del sogno*: come Dante, poco edotto, com’ egli confessa, dell’ arte di grammatica, aveva operato, a acquistar altezza d’ingegno, sopra i sudati testi delle sue letture al tempo della *decenne sete*. Chè là dove grammatica e ingegno non lo soccorrevano, egli suppliva col sogno, con l’intuizione cioè vivificata dalla poesia: “per lo quale ingegno molte cose, *quasi come sognando*, già vedea,” egli, il disegnatore di spiriti. Quello che usa, dunque, chiamare il “mondo” del Poema altro non è che la storia del suo proprio tempo, e quella conosciuta ai tempi del Poeta. L’interpretazione, però, di quel “mondo” dev’ essere fatta risalire, più quasi che a quella storia stessa, alle fonti della ispirazione di Dante, le quali, più e meglio assai dei

libri da lui letti, più e meglio della *sua* cultura, sono nella *sua* poesia e nel nostro sogno.

\* \* \* \* \*

Già, dunque, da quel tempo della mia immaturità, per quanto bramoso di penetrare ogni velame con un continuo studio, s'era venuta radicando in me la diffidenza delle quasi sempre contrarie glosse del Poema. Non ignoravo che, in vita, l'Alighieri, “quasi a guisa di filosofo mal grazioso non sapea,—come Giovanni Villani afferma di lui,—conversare coi laici,” e che quindi a nessun commento d'altri, posteriore alla sua morte, ci si convenisse ciecamente d'affidarci. Sapevo che la vera sentenza, d'altronde, com'è scritto nel *Convivio*, “per alcuno vedere non si può, s'io non la conto,” e che nè critica filologica nè letteraria nè, quasi, storica stessa potevano illuminarmi adeguatamente i passi nei quali “il più divin s'involà,” se non li avessi interpretati io stesso con lume solo di poesia, che unico può illuminare, meglio d'ogni altro, pure la storia. E ricordavo certa risposta del poeta tedesco della *Messiade*, il quale a chi l'importunava volesse spiegare certi passi oscuri, rispondeva: “Allora che li scrissi, lo sapevamo io e Dio: ora, se non se ne ricorda lui, io, per me, me ne sono scordato.”

La *Commedia*, visione di “alte cose,” è ben più che fiore e frutto degli studi dall'Alighieri compiuti nella sua “decenne sete.” Rileggendo i suoi testi, la ciceroniana *De Amicitia* o il Sogno di Scipione, rileggendo il *De Consolatione* di Boezio, San Bernardo, Sant'Agostino, Pietro Lombardo, Alberto Magno, la

*Visio Tundali*, San Bonaventura, Ugo e Riccardo di San Vittore, Brunetto e l'Aquinate, Aristotile etico e la Lettera ai Corinti, l'Apocalisse e "lo Genesi" stesso, ci avvicineremo assai meno al più vero e maggiore Dante, che se ci accostiamo a lui con verginità d'anima e d'intuizione.

Qualcuno, che pur di Dante conosce profondamente "lo fondo," il d'Ovidio, per esempio, ha scritto: "Si pongono i problemi come sciarade, si vogliono sciogliere più o meno astrattamente con qualche bel ritrovato. Si vuol addentrarsi nel mondo del poema, senza aver l'occhio al mondo del poeta: alle sue letture predilette, alle dottrine dei suoi maestri, alle fantasie dei suoi autori, le quali furono come la materia greggia rilavorata dalla fantasia sua." Non nego che la conoscenza delle letture, delle dottrine, delle fantasie dei probabili autori dell'Alighieri possano essere utili alla comprensione della *cultura* del Poeta. Ma queste, ahimè, se isolate, anzi che avvicinarci, ci fanno retrocedere più d'una volta da quello ch'è, a noi, Dante, ce ne complicano e a volte oscurano l'intelligenza. Legger cronisti o storici, da Ricordano a Dino Compagni e al Villani, ci agevola la cognizione del suo mondo storico, senza dubbio: ma sarebbe assurdo, così da essi come dai suoi autori, attenderci la chiarificazione di quanto è tenebroso o enigmatico o controverso nella *Commedia*. Quei suoi autori rimangono per sè, quello ch'essi sono. Sono, in qualche modo, chi più chi meno, estrinseci alla sua opera, come Svetonio e Plutarco sono estrinseci all'opera immane dello



Shakespeare, come lo Spencer e il Chapman traduttore di Omero sono esteriori al favoloso mondo lirico del Keats. Questa delle ricerche delle fonti diviene, parmi, fatica sempre più oziosa, da tesi scolastiche (nè bene storiche, nè bene estetiche), quando sia ben più necessario solo, mettendoci a petto a petto con i più ardui poeti dell' umanità, vedere profondamente in essi e, per la nostra consolazione, continuare nel nostro sogno il loro, far rifiorire, tutta verde e nuova, e fruttificare la pianta immortale della loro poesia.

Dante, a volte, è illogico: come il sogno. Tanto meglio. Dante ci lascia, innumere volte, dubitosi, non dei simboli soli, ma degli stessi agonisti storici del suo Poema. Quella dubbiezza e vaghezza sono parte viva a noi della sua poesia. Dante ci nasconde nomi volti gesti di persone. Poichè egli ha voluto che così fosse, perchè lamentarcene, perchè voler violare, con testardaggine peggio che puerile, il suo alto segreto,—fascino, e non dei minori, della sua fantasia? La *Commedia* è sogno, realtà cioè più vera e intensa della vita nostra mortale,—o non è. In questo la sua quasi inaccessibile grandezza. Egli, unico fra i grandissimi poeti—come nemmeno il suo Vergilio—ha trasportato di sana pianta, Giustiziere implacabile e mirifico Poeta, con gesto solo consentito a un Dio creatore e di giustizia, la nostra vita, la nostra aiuola picciola, la nostra morale fra cristiana e pagana, nei tre Regni della Morte. Di lassù, di tra le luci fisse dei Gemelli, egli ha contemplato, quasi in iscorcio di beatifica lumiera, il Cosmo fisico e il morale, come

nessun altro poeta mai nè prima nè dopo, salito su, per la sua scala di poesia, dall' umano al divino, come vuole la nostra natura storica, realista e idealista a un tempo, di gente enotria, di gente nata della terra più varia e chiara e travagliosa d'Europa. Che cosa chiedergli, dunque, di più? Egli ha abolito per noi, come la grande arte unica fa, spazi e tempi: Vergilio è contemporaneo di Sordello, Capaneo di Farinata, Cesare di Cacciaguida. E sono di uno stesso luogo: Arrigo d'Inghilterra e Carlo Martello, Ulisse e Lano da Siena, Maometto e Pier da Medicina. E tutti favellano in una lingua sola,—ombre vane, ma quasi tutte con volto e voce di vivi,—in quella dell' umanità ritornata alla sua origine: in quella di Dante. Ma in quel tempo senza tempo, in quello spazio senza spazio, è l'Uomo, è tutta l'umanità, ignuda di vesti e d'ipocrisia, l'umanità esteriore e interiore, sottomessa a un identico immutabile destino: e a darle risalto, sono la storia antica e la recente, l'Impero e la Chiesa, l'Italia e le città spartite, le sormontanti fazioni, le passioni degli uomini, i loro travimenti, la Fortuna. Due misure, finito e infinito, la cosmica e la terrena, in una sola, due mondi in uno, il mistico e il naturale, due sistemi, l'allegorico e il politico, mescolati e fusi insieme, colti di là e di qua dal "velo" contemporaneamente, in una unità superiore a ogni trattato d'etica, di teologia, di filosofia e di politica: in quella della poesia, "presente eterno," immobile nella parola, ma estendentesi nell' eternità, prolungantesi nella musica, ma fissa in uno schema in cui ogni "metafora

è realtà,” ogni “figura è lettera.” La chiave storica del Poema Sacro possono essere, sì, Roma eterna, “caput mundi,” e l'imperiale Vergilio; ma la lucerna che ci segnerà sicuramente la via per le sue ascensioni, non potrà essere che quella della poesia, che ognuno di noi ha, varia, nel profondo cuore, e ch'è *noi* più della nostra stessa esistenza: “a quel modo che ditta dentro,” dunque,—come usava far Dante stesso con la *sua* poesia.

\* \* \* \*

Dunque? Non disconosco, fra il ciarpame molto, le grandi benemeritenze acquistate, per la conoscenza della vita, della cultura e dei tempi di Dante, da parecchi instauratori della critica storica, italiani e stranieri, dal Foscolo al Vossler. Ma, fra tutti, se io volessi essere condotto da qualche fida scorta per mano a Dante, preferirei rileggermi alcune pagine prestigiose del Tommaseo, del Carlyle, del De Sanctis e del Carducci, a citare alcuni degli esegeti-poeti che meglio appagano la mia sete d'interpretazione estetica o lirica.

E non disconosco, chè sarebbe ingratitudine e idiozia, gli alti meriti di tutti quei pazientissimi ricercatori delle migliori lezioni dell' opera dantesca, dal Witte al Barbi, dal Moore al Del Lungo, dal Vernon al Parodi, dal Toynbee al Passerini, grazie al cui indefesso e laborioso amore riusciremo, fra qualche mese o anno, parrebbe, a avere fra le mani il testo definitivo della *Commedia*. Essi soli avranno, coi loro studi, compiuto più di quanto, forse, sei secoli



interi hanno operato a onorare Dante. Grazie a loro, la maggiore fatica sarà stata compiuta. E, se Dio voglia, non dovremo udire più parlare di commenti nuovi e di nuove originali esegesi di Dante. Saremo soli, anche una volta, finalmente, con lui, col Poeta nostro, a faccia a faccia col suo testo più probabile, liberi di leggerlo e d'interpretarlo, ciascuno a seconda della l' "anima dantesca" che ci saremo venuti formando nel quotidiano studio o amore del suo Poema, nella misura della nostra intuizione, in relazione diretta e immediata con la nostra più squisita facoltà intellettuale: la poesia. Siamo, dunque, arrivati oggi, in questo Centenario dantesco, al bivio fatale. Il Croce, col suo bel volume recente, apre la strada maestra, che qualche spirito solitario aveva divinato nei secoli morti. Chiunque studierà Dante nell' avvenire, per la gioia e la pace dell' anima sua solamente, dovrà mettersi per quella. Gli altri, e sarà giusta pena, continueranno a incanagliarsi e a dannarsi per le ambagi ridevoli della loro propria selva oscura.

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Ricordi, amico mio, una nostra visita al tempietto della Valle Giulia, in Roma, in cui s'è temporaneamente rifugiato, sorto su dal suo silenzio e dal suo esilio sotterraneo di almeno ventitre secoli, l'Apollo etrusco di Vei? Il cielo di settembre era vivo turchese, sopra e intorno a noi. Il sole del meriggio stagliava netti ogni edificio ogni pietra ogni pianta ogni fiore, contro quell' azzurro di cristallo. La nostra guida, il Giglioli, direttore valentissimo del Museo ci prece-

dette, fra le lucide siepi di bosso e di mortella, sino al colonnato dipinto. Aprì la grande porta. E là, contro l'ombra cerula, avvolto fulmineamente dalla gran luce del suo astro, il terribile Iddio chiomato e clamidato e coturnato d'Etruria, che un lucumone di Vei, contemporaneo forse di Demarato Corinzio o di Tarquinio Prisco, aveva fatto plasmare e colorare da qualche etrusco discepolo di un peloponnesiaco o corinzio scultore *Buona-Mano*, o di un pittore *Buon-Disegno*, o di un architetto *Misura-di-Giove*, per la sua feroce satrapia religiosa, ci apparve, alto e proteso come a procedere, subitamente vendicativo, verso di noi,—con fra i piedi, ostacolo unico, una muta lira senza corde,—immortalmente vivo sul suo zoccolo. La fissità ermetica dello sguardo chino, l'enigma crudele del suo sorriso incuterono nelle nostre anime, come nessuna cosa viva o morta mai, un terrore inesprimibile. E io, non so perchè, ho pensato, allora, a Dante, romano e langobardo, ma più forse misterioso epigone dei *gravi cittadini* etruschi, a Dante e al suo sorriso di segreta e malevola gioia di fronte a Filippo Argenti, a Farinata e agli altri dannati di Fiorenza o d'altrove, che il Poeta nostro seppe crudelissimamente odiare.

Poscia, di sulle tavole vicine, sopra le quali erano disordinatamente raccolti i più recenti scavi di Vei, fra le antefisse delle ironiche Meduse variodipinte e fra le maschere dei barbuti Acheloi, trascelsi, a caso, una meravigliosa testina di terracotta. Non m'era nuovo, quel delicato e forte viso di giovinetto sorridente appena, del sesto secolo prima di Cristo. Lo

avevo veduto prima. Quando? L'identica modellatura della creta, la squisita e meticolosa grazia stessa dei capelli cesellati e un poco inanellati mi fecero affiorare nella memoria rapita un nome. E a voce alta dissi: "Verrocchio." Il Giglioli sorrise lievemente. E annuì.

Quell' Apollo e gl' idoli colleghi e contemporanei suoi erano stati seppelliti nella notte della terra etrusca, per secoli lunghi, sino a ieri. Nè il Verrocchio, nè Jacopo della Quercia, nè il Donatello, nè il Ghiberti conobbero mai quelli nè altri simili a loro. Pure dalla misteriosa terra stessa, d'onde erano nati, in cui erano sprofondate le radici della loro stirpe, essi, quegli artefici, trassero inconsapevolmente l'ispirazione prima e lo stile d'ineffabile grazia e di forza schietta della loro magica arte. E così è avvenuto, naturalmente, all' etrusco Dante. Nella terra da cui egli è nato, nell' arte che da quella terra è stata nei lontani secoli espressa in marmo, in bronzo, in colori, in parole, nella poesia, in una parola, di quella sua terra natale potremo, amico, ritemprare, come in fucina sempre ardente, la nostra stessa individuale poesia. E ubbidiremo, così, al monito delio saviamente interpretato da Enea: "*Antiquam exquirite Matrem.*"

Ma di questo, con orazion meno breve e picciola, m'intratterrò più a lungo, spero, insieme a te, fra due o tre settimane, quando, ritornato nella patria nostra, tu mi condurrà, come mi hai promesso, a Anagni e a Sermoneta, a ritrovarvi la grande Ombra del tuo antenato.



Passeremo anche, confido, allora, sotto alle verdi purmo' nate chiome della nova Primavera, dalla tua Ninfa feudale, più che storia, mito semisepolto nella selvatica rigogliosa e febbricosa maremma pontina. In quel silenzio della città morta, riviva e lussureggiante, fra le stagnanti acque, di mille fiori e uccelli e serpi e farfalle, interprete meglio eloquente di quale si sia scritta parola, riapriremo il Dante. La storia antica e la contemporanea saranno una cosa sola senza intermittenza, a noi, quali, in realtà, esse sono, tranne che ai ciechi e all' oltracottata schiatta dei pedanti. E storia e leggenda, insieme fuse inestricabilmente, *dittateci dentro* dalla Madre Antica, saranno chiave e lucerna a noi nell' interpretazione del Poema Sacro.

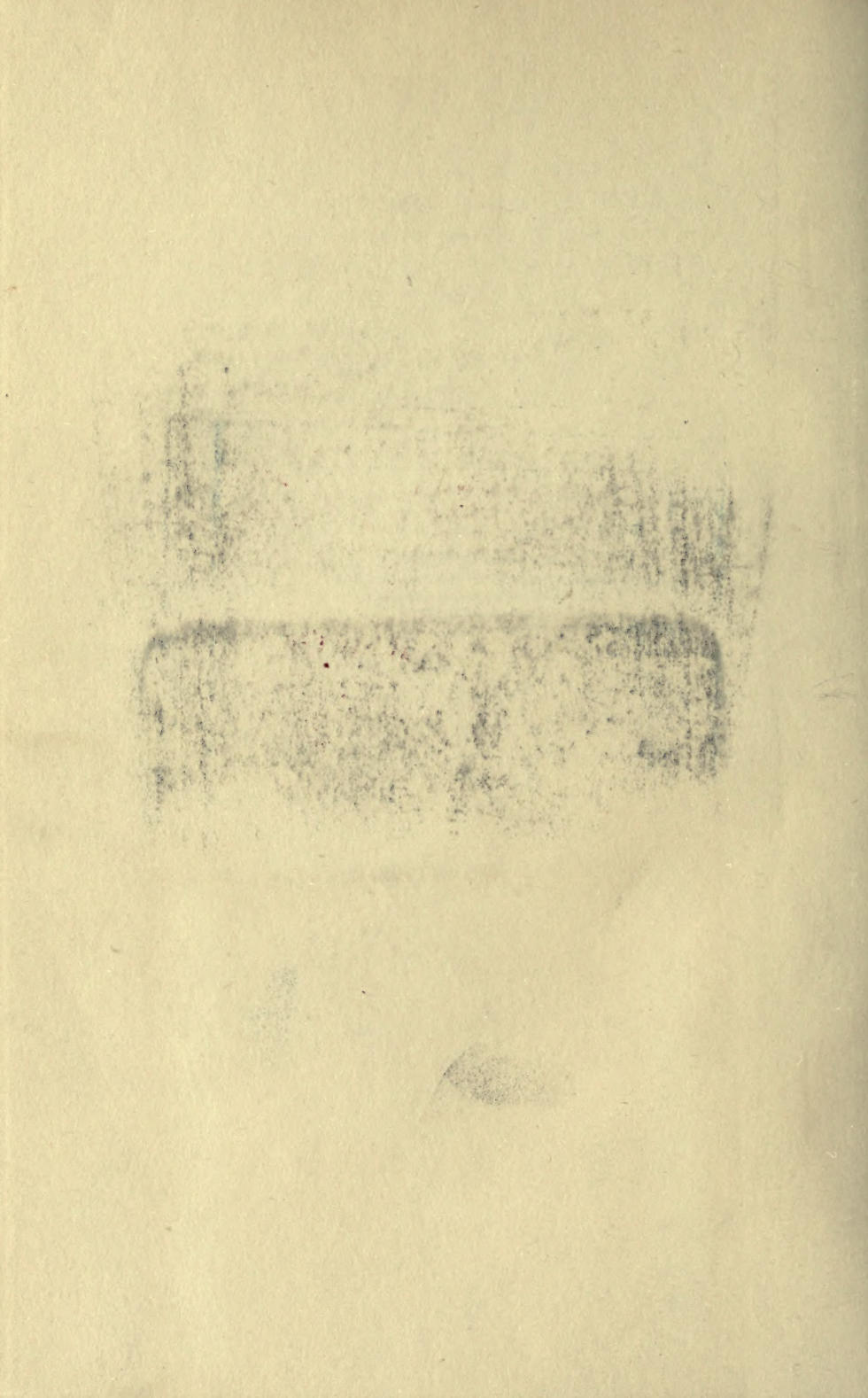
Rileggeremo, per forse la millesima volta, assisi sopra un rudere pezzato di gromme, il canto eroico di Ulisse, quel giorno. E, tesi gli orecchi al largo molle e profumato vento del Tirreno, udiremo, distinto, in quel silenzio, giungerci, sul vento istesso, dal selvoso Circeo, il canto immortale della Maga.

*Ave valeque*, amico mio molto caro, Ulisside della Alaska e del Col di Lana.

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